The Birth of a Heruka

How Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan became gTsang smyon Heruka:

A Study of a Mad Yogin

Stefan Larsson



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Cover: Statue of gTsang smyon Heruka, 16th century. (c) Reproduced with permission, *Portraits of the Masters*, 2003, Serindia Publications and Oliver Hoare Ltd.

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The inspiration, heart and soul of this study mainly come from Lama Ngawang, an old Tibetan lama who lives in Sweden. If I had not met this humorous, enigmatic, wise and compassionate person more than twenty years ago I would never have written this dissertation. Lama Ngawang enjoyed telling stories about 'Brug pa kun legs and A khu ston pa, and he often watched videos and dvds about the mad Chinese monk Ji gong.[1] Lama Ngawang not only introduced me to the mad yogins of Tibet, but his unpredictable and spontaneous behavior has given me a vague hint of what the "disciplined conduct" of gTsang smyon might have been like.

When it comes to the more concrete activity of writing the dissertation I would first of all like to acknowledge my supervisor, Per-Arne Berglie, who has patiently guided me along the way. Without his knowledge, support and assistance I would never have managed to complete this dissertation. Not to forget is my assistant supervisor Erik af Edholm, who also provided me with invaluable help and guidance.

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[1] Lama Ngawang is old and infirm nowadays and it has been several years since I heard him tell these stories. However, he still watches videos of Ji gong from time to time.

Budapest studying the life stories together with Khenpo Acharya Chögyel Tenzin. Besides sharing his learning with me, he treated me like a family member, although we had never met before, and for this I feel privileged and happy. During my time as a Ph.D. candidate, I also received important help with reading Tibetan and Sanskrit texts from my advisor Per-Arne Berglie and from Urban Hammar. While I was in Virginia, the Tibetan scholar Khenpo Ngawang Dorje checked translations that are crucial for this dissertation. I have also received some translation help from Khenpo Tsering Samdrub when he visited Sweden in 2004. Moreover, I have benefited from reading some sections of the life stories with Lama Tsultrim Rinpoche, who moved to Sweden during the course of my studies.

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also like to express many heartfelt thanks to David Germano for his inspiring Tibetan classes and for the Tibetan Renaissance Seminar that he led.

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I have also received a grant from Knut och Alice Wallenbergs Stiftelse that enabled me to visit the 11th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies conference in Bonn 2006.

I have saved for last those most deserving my gratitude. Without the the support, patience and love that I have received from my family over the years I would never have finished this project. During my time as a Ph.D. candidate I have traveled to several countries and have often been far away, sometimes bodily and often in thoughts. Despite this I have always felt the closeness, love and support from my wife, Maria Kristensson, from my two sons, Joel and Love, from my sister Lena Larsson, and from my mother and father Birgitta and Lennart Larsson. My parents supported me both financially (when I was in Tibet and Virginia) and practically (e.g. babysitting), and my wife took sole responsibility for our sons while I was in Tibet and Virginia.

It amazes me to think about how lucky I have been to have met with all these people who have generously assisted me and shared their knowledge. If this work contains any merits it is because of their kind assistance and contributions. Needless to say, the shortcomings are entirely mine. Finally, I would like to offer many apologies to those whom I have forgotten to mention.

Abbreviations

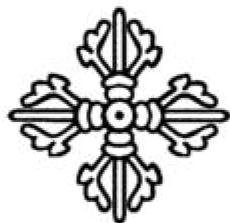
G	rGod tshang ras pa sna tshogs rang grol. 1969 [1512]. *gTsang smyon he ru ka phyogs thams cad las rnam par rgyal ba'i rnam thar rdo rje theg pa'i gsal byed nyi ma'i snying po.*
L	Lha btsun rin chen rnam rgyal. 1971 [1543]. *Grub thob gtsang pa smyon pa'i rnam thar dad pa'i spu slong g.yo ba.*
N	dNgos grub dpal 'bar. 1508. *rJe btsun gtsang pa he ru ka'i thun mong gi rnam thar yon tan gyi gangs ril dad pa'i seng ge rnam par rtse ba.*
NGMPP	Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project
T	Thu'u bkwan blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma. 1989. *Khyab bdag rdo rje sems dpa'i ngo bo dpal ldan bla ma dam pa ye shes bstan pa'i sgron me dpal bzang po'i rnam par thar pa mdo tsam brjod pa dge ldan bstan pa'i mdzes rgyan.*
TBRC	Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre

Pronunciation key

Tibetan is a language whose spelling and pronunciation differ radically. As is customary in academic writings dealing with Tibetan religion, history and culture, I have chosen to write words as they are spelled and not as they are pronounced. To write a word only as it is pronounced, without spelling it according to convention, is to transcribe a sound and not to specify a word. The words thus become devoid of meaning and you can not look them up in a dictionary. The problem with writing as words are spelled is that it makes reading difficult for readers who do not know Tibetan. For the sake of making the reading easier for those readers, I have included this short pronunciation key which shows how the most commonly used names and terms are pronounced.

Spelling	**Pronunciation**
dGe lugs	Gelug
rGod tshang ras pa	Götsang Repa
bKa' brgyud	Kagyu
Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal	Lhatsun Rinchen Namgyel
Lha btsun	Lhatsun
rnam thar	namthar
dNgos grub dpal 'bar	Ngödrub Pelwar
rNying ma	Nyingma
smyon pa	nyönpa
Ras chung pa	Rechungpa
Sa skya	Sakya
Thang stong rgyal po	Thangtong Gyelpo
gTsang	Tsang
gTsang smyon	Tsang Nyön
gTsang smyon Heruka	Tsang Nyön Heruka
brtul zhugs spyod pa	tulshug chöpa
brtul zhugs	tulshug

Part One: Introduction and Sources



Chapter 1: Introduction

gTsang smyon Heruka (1452–1507) is one of Tibet's most famous mad yogins (*rnal 'byor smyon pa*). According to the life stories written about him by his disciples, gTsang smyon claimed that he practised tantric Buddhism and followed in the footsteps of the Indian Buddhist siddhas when he acted in unusual and seemingly mad ways. This claim will be examined in this study. It will be investigated how the "madness" of gTsang smyon relates to Indian Buddhist tantric practice, and how and why the young monk Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan was transformed into a *heruka*. It was after this transformation that he received his sobriquet gTsang smyon Heruka (the Madman of gTsang: the Heruka). Heruka is a generic name for a type of wrathful male tantric deities of central importance in the higher Buddhist tantras, and its meaning will be described more thoroughly during the course of the study.[2] According to the life stories, gTsang smyon saw himself as a heruka, and others also perceived him as such.

gTsang smyon is famous for having compiled the life story and song collection of Tibet's most well-known ascetic, the yogin Milarepa (Mi la ras pa, 1052–1135).[3] The latter work, *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, contains a song about madness/craziness and this song will introduce the main topics of the study. Before citing a section of the song, its setting will be given.

Milarepa Meets Dam pa Sangs rgyas

Once upon a time the Tibetan yogin Milarepa met the Indian siddha Dam pa Sangs rgyas (d. 1117?). When two great masters such as these encountered one another it was customary to test one another in various ways. It was also common that they sang tantric songs. Dam pa Sangs rgyas sang a song in which he explained the Pacification of Suffering-doctrine (*sdug bsngal zhi byed*), of which he was a lineage-holder.

> Milarepa listened to this song with great delight as he sat to one side with his penis freely exposed. Dhampa Sangje [Dam pa Sangs rgyas] remarked, "You

[2] See especially Chapter 8.

[3] Since the name Milarepa is widely known in its pronounced form I have chosen to write it as pronounced.

are like a lunatic who neglects to cover up the place that should be covered." In reply, the jetsun sang "The Song of a Lunatic":

To all Gurus I pay my homage.
I take refuge in the Gracious One,
I pray you, dispel my hindrances;
Bring me to the right Path, I pray.

Men say, "Is not Milarepa mad?"
I also think it may be so.
Now listen to my madness.

The father and the son are mad,
And so are the Transmission
And Dorje-Chang's Succession.
Mad too were my Great-grandfather, the Fair
Sage, Tilopa,
And my Grandfather, Nāropa the great scholar.
Mad, too, was my Father,
Marpa the translator; So too is Milarepa.

The demon of the intrinsic Bodies Four
Makes Dorje-Chang's Succession crazy;
The devil of the Mahāmudrā made
My Great-grandfather Tilopa crazy;
The demon of the secret awareness,
Made my Grandfather Nāropa crazy;
The devil of the Tantras Four
Made my Father Marpa mad;
The demons of Mind and Prāṇa
Have driven me, Milarepa, mad.

The impartial Understanding itself is crazy;
So are the free, self-liberating Actions,
The self-illuminating Practice of No-perception,
The Accomplishment-without-Hope-and-Fear,
And Discipline-without-Pretension.

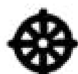
[...]

Dampa sangje was greatly pleased by this song. He said, "Your kind of craziness is very good."[4]

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[4] Chang (trans.) 1989: 610–613; gTsang smyon 1991: 757–759: *rje btsun mnyes shing cha lugs lhug par bzhugs pa la / dam pa'i zhal nas lus la sba rgyu gcig 'dug pa mi sbed par smyon pa'i spyod pa 'dra ba de ma byed gsungs pa la / rje btsun gyis smyon lugs 'di mgur du gsungs so / / rje bla ma rnams la phyag 'tshal lo / / bka' drin can la skyabs su mchi / / mi mthun rkyen dang bar chad sol / / mthun pa'i lam sna chos la drongs / / rnal 'byor mi la ras pa la / / gzhan yang smyo'am smyo'am zer / / rang yang smyo'am snyam pa byung / / smyo ba'i smyo lugs bshad tsa na / / pha smyo bu smyo rgyud pa smyo / / rgyud pa rdo rje 'chang chen smyo / / yang mes tai lo sher bzang smyo / / mes po nāro paṇ chen smyo / pha rgan mar*

This song by Milarepa takes us to the very core of the present study.[5] Milarepa was one of the main sources of inspirations for gTsang smyon, who also belonged to the same lineage of transmission as the Cotton Clad One (Milarepa), namely the bKa' brgyud tradition.[6] The first lineage gurus mentioned in the song—Tilopa, Nāropa, Marpa[7] and Milarepa—are the spiritual forefathers of all the four greater and eight lesser bKa' brgyud traditions.[8] Besides introducing gTsang smyon's lineage of transmission, the song also introduces the so-called "mad way" (*smyo lugs*), that was characteristic of some of the yogins of the bKa' brgyud tradition.[9]



The common picture of Buddhism in the West is that of a rational and logical religion. The Buddhist monk is generally presented as the Buddhist ideal, and we are often told that it is the monk that is best suited to progress on the Buddhist path towards enlightenment. According to the rules of monastic discipline, a monk must have certain clothes, shave his head, live in celi-

---

pa lo tsā smyo / nga rang mi la ras pa smyo // rgyud pa rdo rje 'chang chen de // sku bzhi lhun grub gdon gyis smyo // yang mes tē lo sher bzang de // phyag rgya chen po'i gdon gyis smyo // mes po nā ro paṇ chen de // rig pa brtul zhugs gdon gyis smyo // pha rgan mar pa lo tsā de // rgyud sde bzhi yi gdon gyis smyo // nga rang mi la ras pa 'di // rlung sems gnyis kyi gdon gyis smyo / phyogs ris med pa'i lta ba smyo // dmigs med rang gsal sgom pa smyo // 'dzin med rang grol spyod pa smyo // re dogs med pa'i 'bras bu smyo // zol zog med pa'i dam tshig smyo // [...] / dam pa shin tu mnyes nas rnal 'byor pa khyod kyi smyo lugs de legs byung gsung ba la /.

[5] There is also another version of the song that Milarepa sang to Dam pa sangs rgyas. This alternative version is included in another collection compiled by gTsang smyon's disciple Lha btsun rin chen rnam rgyal (1473–1557) and it is similar but shorter. An English translation of this version of the song is included in Kunga and Cutillo 1978: 85–89, and also in Stearns 1980: 154–156. For the Tibetan text, see Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal 1985: 211–216. A somewhat similar song, ascribed to Ko brag pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (Ko brag pa, 1170–1249), is found in Ko brag pa's song collection, which Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal also compiled. For an English translation of the song (as well as the Tibetan text), see Stearns 2000: 46–51.

[6] The alternative spelling *dkar brgyud* ("white lineage") is sometimes encountered in the sources. This name refers to the white cotton clothes (*ras*) that some of the bKa' brgyud yogins wore. Several of the early 'Brug pa bka' brgyud masters were *ras pa*s, for example, gLing ras pa, Lo ras pa and gTsang pa rGya ras. Moreover, Milarepa (Mi la ras pa), Ras chung and rGod tshang ras pa were *ras pas*.

[7] I will write Marpa instead of Mar pa to make the dissertation more readable.

[8] Shangs pa bKa' brgyud is an additional bKa' brgyud tradition that is not counted among the four greater and eight lesser bKa' brgyud schools; it was founded by mKhas grub Khyung po rnal 'byor (1002–1064). The four greater and eight lesser bKa' brgyud traditions are enumerated in, for example, Smith 2001: 41–46.

[9] It should be noted that mad masters exist in other traditions of Tibetan Buddhism too.

bacy, and abstain from alcohol and so forth; many rules govern the life of the lay and ordained practitioner alike. The Buddhist path to awakening is often portrayed as being characterized by self-discipline, peaceful behavior, and calm deportment in general. gTsang smyon and the other mad yogins of Tibet are interesting because they challenge this picture of Buddhism. The mad yogin often had long hair, he (or occasionally she) generally did not live in celibacy, he sometimes drank alcohol, and as we will see, repeatedly behaved in provocative and seemingly crazy ways. The looks and behavior of the mad yogins are thus in sharp contrast to those of the Buddhist monks. It would, however, be a mistake to see the mad yogins' behavior as uncontrolled or undisciplined; their conduct is better understood as another type of discipline.

The mad yogins represent a side of Buddhism that is not that well-known, a side that seems to have existed long before Buddhism came to Tibet. Since similar figures exist in many religions, the mad yogins of Tibet exemplify a wider religious phenomenon, and studying them can therefore broaden our picture, not only of Buddhism, but also of religion in general.[10]

The main sources of this study are three life stories (*rnam thar*) that gTsang smyon's disciples wrote about him.[11] rGod tshang ras pa sNa thogs rang grol (1482–1559) composed a text named *Heart of the Sun*; Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal (1473–1557), a text called the *Life Story which Causes the Body-Hairs of the Faithful to Flutter*; and finally, dNgos grub dpal 'bar (ca. 1460?–?), a text titled *Lion of Faith*.[12] Based on the contents of these three texts, gTsang smyon's life could roughly be divided into three periods:

1. The formative period: birth, childhood and early life, lasting until his early twenties. During this time he became a monk, met his main teacher, received teachings and empowerments (*dbang*, *abhiṣekha*)[13] and studied in a monastery.

[10] For some examples of similar figures in other religions, see, for example, Dahlén 2002; Feuerstein 2006; Thompson 1987.

[11] I will alternatively refer to these types of texts as life stories, hagiographies, biographies and *rnam thar*.

[12] These are abbreviated forms of the titles. For the full titles in Tibetan, see the Bibliography. The three authors of the life stories will frequently be referred to by using the first part of their names. Hence, rGod tshang ras pa sNa tshogs rang grol will be referred to as "rGod tshang ras pa", and Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal as "Lha btsun". dNgos grub dpal 'bar has a rather short name and no abbreviation will be used for him. When referring to the three main sources in the footnotes I will use the letter "G" for the life story that rGod tshang ras pa wrote, the letter "L" for the the life story that Lha btsun wrote, and the letter "N" for the life story that dNgos grub dpal 'bar wrote. The three sources will be described in more detail in Chapter 2.

[13] Tibetan and Sanskrit words will sometimes be included in parentheses. When both Tibetan and Sanskrit terms are provided, the Tibetan term generally comes first.

2. The period when he "practised disciplined conduct" (*brtul zhugs spyod pa*),[14] lasting from his early twenties to his early thirties. During this time he wandered around as a mad yogin, meditated in remote caves, performed miracles, and so forth.
3. The period of fame and influence that lasted from his early thirties until his death. During this phase he compiled and printed texts, renovated the Svayambhū Stūpa in Nepal, established meditation centers, gathered disciples and benefactors, sang songs of realization (*mgur*), bestowed empowerments (*dbang*) and teachings, and so forth.

A Summary of the Life of gTsang smyon Heruka according to the Hagiographies

gTsang smyon was born 1452 in gTsang, the western part of Central Tibet.[15] According to the hagiographies, gTsang smyon's birth and childhood were marked by extraordinary events. When he was seven or eight years old, a strong disgust towards cyclic existence and an unbearable compassion for the beings who suffer therein arose; he became a monk and received the ordination name Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan.[16]

As a young monk, he became famous for his great emphasis on discipline, and it is mentioned that he took poison rather than impinge on his monk vows. Studying many sūtras he soon became well-known for his capacity to remember and recite texts by heart. At that time, he had several dreams and visions urging him to leave his home, and when he was eighteen, he managed to do so. During a trip to the holy pilgrimage place of Tsāri,[17] he met his "root lama" (*rtsa ba'i bla ma*), Sha ra rab 'byams pa Sangs rgyas seng ge (1427–1470), from whom he received many teachings and empowerments.

After having completed his studies and performed meditation under his guru's guidance, gTsang smyon studied in the famous dPal 'khor chos sde monastery in rGyal rtse (Gyantse) not far from his birthplace for three or

[14] "Disciplined conduct" is a key concept that will be frequently encountered in the dissertation. The term will be explained in detail in Chapter 8.

[15] I have used the above-mentioned three texts when making this summary and also a short life story composed by Thu'u bkwan bLo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737–1802). Since I will return to these texts and their contents, I have chosen not to include references to them yet. For a map of Tibet, see p. 54.

[16] The sources differ. It should be noticed that according to the Tibetan system calculating age, everyone is one year already at birth this means that a person who is seven according to Tibetan calculation is six according to Western calculation. Except in the chronological outline (Appendix 4), I render age according to the Tibetan system of counting.

[17] There are many different ways of spelling the name of this place, and I will always spell it Tsāri regardless of how it is spelled in the sources.

four years.[18] He soon became expert in performing the complicated tantric rituals and was thus formally educated as a vajra master (*rdo rje slob dpon*). He also became learned in many tantras and their Indian and Tibetan commentaries, *Hevajra Tantra* in particular.

gTsang smyon's actual debut as a mad yogin occurred when his monastery was being visited by especially prominent and important guests. On this occasion, he behaved in a very insulting and crazy manner that forced the master of studies (*slob dpon*) of the monastery to rebuke him.

After this incident, the twenty-one-year-old gTsang smyon left his monastery and became a wandering yogin with no fixed abode. Abandoning not only his monastery but also his monk vows, he started to follow another kind of discipline, called "disciplined conduct" (*brtul zhugs*) in the hagiographies. His famous sobriquet "the Madman of gTsang"—gTsang smyon—was given to him soon after he had left his monastery by some people of Tsāri. This important event is described in the following way in the *Heart of the Sun*:

> Having thought extensively about how to benefit the Buddhist doctrine and living beings, he went to a very great gathering in Tsāri. His body was naked, soiled with ashes from corpses, spotted with blood, and smeared with fat. He made a necklace and ornaments for his feet and hands [using] the intestines of a dead man's body. He cut off the fingers and toes, tied them together with a thread of muscle fibres and bound his hair with it. A person offered him an incomplete set of thin bone ornaments which he wore on his body. Sometimes he laughed and sometimes he cried. In particular, he carried out various kinds of outrageous behavior in the market place.
>
> Even though the conduct of the people of Tsāri was very rough [gTsang smyon's] compassion brought them under his control, and they were subdued by his power. They revered him very much and agreed to call him the Madman of gTsang. Then he became as famous as the sun and the moon in all directions.[19]

For the remaining thirty-plus years of his life, gTsang smyon never settled anywhere permanently. He wandered between different holy places, and though he might stay in one place for years to meditate, he always continued his travels. gTsang smyon's favorite places to meditate were three locales connected with the tantric deity Cakrasaṃvara: Tsāri in Southeastern Tibet; La phyi in Southern Tibet close to the Nepalese border; and Kailāsa in Southwestern Tibet. In these places he stayed many times, often for several years, to meditate. gTsang smyon also went to other holy places, and he often walked in the footsteps of his great role model: Milarepa. Milarepa had meditated in La phyi and Ti se (Kailāsa)[20] but also in many other remote

[18] The sources give different accounts of how long he stayed.

[19] G: 37–38. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1. The same passage is translated in Quintman 2006: 193.

[20] The variant spelling Te se is found in some hagiographies, but I will use the more common Ti se regardless of how it is spelled in the sources. For more on Ti se, see Snelling 1990.

areas such as Chu bar and the so-called Six Forts in the sKyid grong area close to the Nepalese border. gTsang smyon often stayed in these caves to meditate, and later in life he also composed books in them. Furthermore, he went to Lhasa a couple of times and visited Kathmandu three times. He also visited gLo (Mustang), in present day Nepal close to the Tibetan border, three times.

gTsang smyon gradually became famous and gained supporters and disciples. Many of the leaders of the areas he visited became his benefactors and devotees. The network of people who supported him eventually enabled him to accomplish several of the works for which he became famous.

In his late twenties, he had a visionary encounter with the tantric deity, Hevajra who encouraged him to write texts. After that, he wrote a ritual text about Hevajra. It was also in his late twenties that he started to attract disciples and sing spiritual songs (*mgur*).

He continued to compose texts and sing spiritual songs from time to time, and when he was in his late thirties, during a three-year stay in La phyi, his most important literary works—the hagiography and song collection of Milarepa—were completed. These works became widely disseminated and were also accepted as authoritative by the different Tibetan Buddhist traditions. The importance of this enterprise can hardly be overestimated. gTsang smyon's versions of the *Life* and the *Songs* of Milarepa are among the most widely read Tibetan texts ever written, and both texts have been translated into numerous languages. gTsang smyon was a pioneer in using the relatively new wood-block-printing technique, and this enabled him to make many copies of his works and to disseminate them all over Tibet. Besides being one of Tibet's greatest authors, he was thus a key figure in the history of printing in the country.

Having completed his works on Milarepa, gTsang smyon continued to wander. Alternatively meditating, composing texts, instructing disciples and singing spiritual songs, his fame steadily increased and he became an important political figure in Tibet and elsewhere. It is paradoxical perhaps that a man who promoted the life of a mendicant yogin, and who emulated and propagated the lifestyle of Milarepa, had so many important connections among the powerful leaders. According to the hagiographies, gTsang smyon sometimes used his influence to reconcile the two sides in disputes and wars, and it was not uncommon that both the warring parties were his disciples and therefore listened to him.

gTsang smyon also performed many miracles, healed the sick and removed epidemics that afflicted certain areas. He subdued ghosts, the walking dead (*ro lang*) and various kinds of evil spirits. These activities made him famous as a siddha (*grub thob*) and he was greatly respected and renowned for his powers.

gTsang smyon practised and disseminated the core teachings of the bKa' brgyud tradition. He was known for his expertise and accomplishment in the

Six Dharmas of Nāropa (*Nāro chos drug*), the Four Letter Mahāmudrā (*Phyag chen yi ge bzhi pa*) and the esoteric Aural Transmissions (*sNyan brgyud*) of the bKa' brgyud tradition that had been transmitted by Milarepa's closest disciples. gTsang smyon was a lineage holder of the Aural Transmission lineage, a lineage that had been transmitted by obscure yogins and yoginīs, and not by aristocratic lineages of scholar abbots. Milarepa's disciple Ras chung pa (1085–1161) was a central figure in the Aural Transmission lineage and one of the main Aural Transmission lineges is called the Aural Transmission of Ras chung (*Ras chung sNyan brgyud*).[21]

gTsang smyon's largest literary work was a compilation of these Aural Transmissions that included both his own works and works attributed to other masters of the tradition. He also compiled a hagiography and song collection of Marpa (1002/1012–1097), the teacher of Milarepa. This work also became popular and widely disseminated.

In 1504, the king of Kathmandu, Ratnamalla, invited gTsang smyon to Nepal. Ratnamalla had repeatedly requested him to restore the famous Svayambhū Stūpa. Despite his disciples' attempt to persuade him to postpone this difficult endeavor, encouraged by a vision, he decided that the time was ripe to do it. The renovation took less than three months, and many people participated. Having successfully accomplished the renovation of the famous stūpa, he returned to Tibet. The hagiographies describe how even those who previously had entertained doubts about gTsang smyon were won over and were filled with faith when they heard how he had renovated the stūpa.

The Seventh Karmapa, Chos grags rgya mtsho (1451–1502), who was the most powerful religious dignitary at the time, wrote him a letter of praise, and the most powerful worldly leader of Tibet at the time—Don yod rdo rje (1462–1512)—invited him to visit and treated him with great respect. The acknowledgement he received from these and other religious and secular leaders was a sure sign that he had reached the highest possible esteem.

Having successfully renovated the Svayambhū Stūpa, and also having written down and printed the hagiography and song collection of Milarepa, as well as an extensive collection of the Aural Transmissions of the bKa' brgyud tradition, he felt that his mission in life was completed. He showed some signs of illness and decided that he should pass away in the Cave of Ras chung (Ras chung phug) south of rTse thang (Tsetang). After a few weeks, in 1507, at age fifty-five (fifty-six according to Tibetan reckoning), he passed away, and his death was accompanied by miracles. People all over Tibet and Nepal lit butter lamps and made other offerings when they heard about gTsang smyon's death. Many statues of him were made, and his songs and life story were written down and printed. A large number of his disciples followed his example and practised meditation in the remote mountain areas

[21] For an abbreviated life story of Ras chung in English, see Thrangu Rinpoche 2002.

that he himself had frequently visited and stayed at. His disciples also carried on his literary activities and composed many texts, mainly hagiographies, song collections and instructions connected with his transmission lineage.

Aims, Demarcations and Disposition

The main aim of this dissertation is to describe how Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan was transformed into a mad yogin. Moreover, his subsequent activities as a mad yogin will be depicted and investigated. According to his life stories he was neither known as gTsang smyon (Madman of gTsang) nor as Heruka until his early twenties. Before that he had other names, the most common being the name he received when he was ordained: Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan.[22]

Since this study will focus on how gTsang smyon became a mad yogin and on how he practised "disciplined conduct", it is the first and second of the above-mentioned three periods of gTsang smyon's life which are the main focus (i.e. his first thirty years). The third period of his life (i.e. his last twenty-five years) will not be entirely neglected; however I will restrict myself to summarizing this period. It should be noted that there is a rather dramatic dividing line between the first and second periods, but no clear-cut dividing line between the second and third periods of his life.

A somewhat secondary aim has been to analyze and contextualize the hagiographical material on which the study is based. I have chosen to focus on the religio-buddhological contexts and particularly on the Tibetan tantric Buddhist context. This demarcation entails that I have abstained from using, for example, pathological and psychological models when analyzing and conceptualizing the hagiographical material. It would, for example, be possible to investigate how the "madness" of gTsang smyon relates to indigenous medical ideas about madness. However, since it is rather obvious that gTsang smyon and the other famous Tibetan mad yogins were not seen as being pathologically mad by their contemporaries, I think that religious, mainly Buddhist, explanations of their "madness" are more apt and useful when trying to understand them.

The historical context in which the mad yogins lived is another important aspect to take into consideration when studying them. It seems unlikely that it was a mere coincidence that the famous mad yogins all lived during the same period.[23] Despite the relevance of examining the historical and political contexts during gTsang smyon's and his disciples' lifetimes, I have chosen

[22] For the sake of convenience, I will stick to his sobriquet—gTsang smyon—in this dissertation, also when describing the earlier parts of his life.

[23] The most famous mad yogins of Tibet all lived in the 15^{th} and 16^{th} centuries. A survey of them, their tradition, and the period during which they lived will be given below.

not to focus upon those contexts. Such an endeavor would have necessitated extensive studies of many texts, and since very few studies have covered this particular period of Tibetan history it would have been a very difficult project. Moreover, a historically oriented study would have required examining the latter part of gTsang smyon's life, during which he did things that were of more historical significance.

The main sources of this study are Tibetan texts many of which have not previously been studied or translated. My contribution to tibetological, buddhological, and religious studies is to present, analyze and contextualize this unique body of material.

The dissertation consists of three parts and ten chapters. This first part provides an introduction to the study and its sources. A brief presentation of gTsang smyon, his tradition, the mad yogins of Tibet, the historical period when they lived, and of previous studies will be given in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 contains a general discussion about the genres to which the sources belong, namely hagiographies (*rnam thar*) and to some extent songs (*mgur*). The chapter also describes the main sources upon which the dissertation is based.

Part Two is the central section of the dissertation and focuses upon gTsang smyon with special emphasis on how he became a mad yogin and his subsequent activities as a mad yogin. His life, as presented by his disciples, will be explored in this part, which is divided into five chapters. Chapter 3 deals with gTsang smyon's birth and childhood; Chapter 4 with how he became a monk, met his main teacher and studied in a monastery; Chapter 5 how he became a mad yogin; Chapter 6 his activities as a mad yogin, and Chapter 7 the remainder of his life.

Part Three provides two different forms of background: the tantric Buddhist context and an outline of the literature which is associated with gTsang smyon and his tradition. Chapter 8 will investigate and describe the tantric Buddhist practices that gTsang smyon carried out and also look at some terms and concepts that are used in tantric texts for transgressive and seemingly mad behavior. This chapter will make it easier to understand why gTsang smyon acted as he did, and some readers might therefore find it useful to read Chapter 8 before reading Part Two. gTsang smyon's own works, works about and by his main disciples, and about other people associated with him will be presented in Chapter 9. These texts will give us a somewhat wider perspective on gTsang smyon and his tradition.

The dissertation ends with some conclusions derived from the material presented in the preceding three parts (Chapter 10).

Who is Mad?

The Tibetan polymath dGe 'dun chos 'phel (1905–1951)[24] gives a very telling explanation of how relative the concept of madness is in his polemic work *An Adornment for Nāgārjuna's Thought*.[25] In the text dGe 'dun chos 'phel cites Āryadeva's *Catuḥśataka* (*Four Hundred*) where it is explained that one cannot dismiss the minority as being at fault on the basis that they are fewer in number. According to dGe 'dun chos 'phel, Āryadeva concludes his argument with the following rhetorical question: "Therefore, why is it incorrect to say that the whole world is insane?"[26]

dGe 'dun chos 'phel then paraphrases the following story from Candrakīrti's commentary to *Catuḥśataka*, which illustrates the problem of discerning who is mad and who is not.[27]

> Once, in a country, there was an astrologer who went before the king and said, "Seven days from now a rain will fall. All those whose mouths the water enters will go insane." When the king heard that he carefully covered the mouth of his well of drinking water and none of the rain fell into it. His subjects were unable to do the same and so the water went into all of their mouths and they all went insane. The king was the only one whose mind remained normal. In that country the way of thinking and the way of speaking of all the people did not agree with the way of thinking and the way of speaking of the king. Therefore, they all said, "The king is insane" [*rgyal po la smyon pa zhes smod*]. In the end, not knowing what else to do, the king drank the water, whereby he came to agree with everyone else.[28]

dGe 'dun chos 'phel concludes:

> Thus, due to the single great insanity from our having continually drunk the crazing waters [*smyo chu*] of ignorance from time immemorial, there is no confidence whatsoever in our decisions concerning what exists and does not exist, what is and is not. Even though a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or a hundred thousand of such insane people [*smyon pa*] agree, it in no way becomes more credible.[29]

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[24] dGe 'dun chos 'phel was an unorthodox figure and is sometimes regarded as a mad yogin in his own right.

[25] *kLu grub dgongs rgyan*. The full title of the work is *dBu ma'i zab gnad snying por dril ba'i legs bshad klu sgrub dgongs rgyan* (*Eloquent Distillation of the Profound Points of the Madhyamaka: An Adornment for Nāgārjuna's Thought*) and it is available in English translation in Lopez 2006.

[26] Lopez 2006: 49. Lopez mentions that this verse does not appear in Āryadeva's *Catuḥśataka* and suggests that dGe 'dun chos 'phel misread the source (Lopez 2006: 49, n. 2).

[27] Lopez notes that this story is found in Candrakīrti's text, but dGe 'dun chos 'phel provides a paraphrase of the story rather than a direct quotation of it (Lopez 2006: 49, n. 2).

[28] Lopez 2006: 49. For the Tibetan text, see dGe 'dun chos 'phel 2001: 86–87.

[29] Lopez 2006: 49. For the Tibetan text, see dGe 'dun chos 'phel 2001: 87.

The story illustrates that madness is a very relative concept which has much to do with the perspective that one may have. For example, if everyone wears clothes then a naked person is considered mad, but if the opposite is the case, a person with clothes is seen as mad. The way in which one defines madness depends on both cultural and historical factors. What was considered mad in Tibet in the 15th and 16th century is perhaps normal to us, and vice versa.

The common word that is used for a mad/crazy person in Tibetan is *smyon pa. Khong smyon pa red* means: "He is mad" and *smyon pa* is here used as a verbal adjective or participle. *sMyon pa* is also used as an adjective proper in such phrases as *kyi smyon pa*; "mad dog". The word *smyon pa* is a nominalization of the verb *smyo ba*, which was used many times in the Milarepa song quoted at the beginning of this dissertation. Jäschke translates the verb with: "to be insane, mad", and gives the alternative spelling: *myo ba*.[30] However, *smyon pa* or its verbal form *smyo ba* does not imply that someone is a mad yogin. Quite the contrary, the word implies mad in the negative sense, just like the English "mad", "crazy" or "insane". This means that when *smyon* is used as a part of gTsang smyon's name, it is used as a metaphor. gTsang smyon resembles a mad person but he is not regarded as being pathologically mad.

The present Dalai Lama once explained why one of his predecessors, dGe 'dun rgya mtsho (1476–1542), referred to himself as a "mad beggar" (*sprang smyon*):[31]

> The implication of "Mad" here is that when a person gains experience of emptiness, the ultimate mode of existence of all phenomena, his perception is as different from that of ordinary people as a madman's. Due to his or her realization of emptiness, a practitioner completely transcends the conventional way of viewing the world.[32]

This statement by the Dalai Lama clarifies how he and many other Tibetans look upon the mad yogins. The source of their mad behavior is believed to be totally different from that of a person who is mad in the ordinary sense of the word. Ardussi and Epstein put it this way: "When Tibetans are questioned about the motivation and meanings of these figures, they almost invariably say that they behave the way they do because they are really Buddhas."[33]

Chögyam Trungpa similarly refers to what he calls "crazy wisdom" such as in the following passages from one of his books:

[30] Jäschke 1977: 428.

[31] This was the Second Dalai Lama. The fact that he was contemporary with gTsang smyon and the other famous mad yogins, indicates that *smyon pa* was a rather common epithet, used far beyond the confines of peripatetic bKa' brgyud yogins in the 15th and 16th centuries.

[32] Dalai Lama 1994: II.

[33] Ardussi & Epstein 1978: 327.

> It is madness beyond the conceptualized point of view of ego. For example, if you are in an outrageous state of hatred and trying to relate with somebody as an object of that hatred, if that person doesn't communicate back to you in terms of hate, you might think he is a mad person. [...] As far as you are concerned, that person is mad, because he has lost his perspective of aggression and passion [...]. From the point of view of samsara, Buddha is mad.[34]

Other terms that are sometimes used for mad yogins are *zhig po* ("mad ascetic") and *'khrul zhig* ("one who has realized emptiness"). Roerich translates *zhig po* in various ways, two examples being: "mad ascetic"[35] and "one who had abandoned all worldly laws".[36] Dan Martin explains that the term refers to "a person who has totally dissolved (*zhig pa*) ordinary clinging to the concept of self as well as the usual bonds of social life."[37] Such "madmen" and "madwomen" act out their realization of Buddhist truths in unconventional, "crazy" ways, he continues.[38]

There are thus several different terms used for the mad Tibetan yogins, and there are also specific terms used for the seemingly mad practices that they engaged in. We will encounter some of these terms in the hagiographies of gTsang smyon when they are presented in Part 2, and also discuss some of the terms in Chapter 8.

The Mad Yogins of Tibet

The mad yogins of Tibet occasionally come up in books and stories. Sometimes we encounter Buddhist masters who are called mad without any further information about the reason for this rather peculiar designation. At other times Buddhist masters who are not called mad are depicted as behaving in a way that seems odd and resembles a mad person's behavior. Seemingly mad behavior is sometimes found where we least expect it. The historical work *Blue Annals* (*Deb ther sngon po*) by Gos lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal (1392–1481), for example, describes how the Indian monk-scholar Atiśa (982–1054)—who was a key figure when Buddhism was reintroduced

[34] Trungpa 1994: 22–23. Trungpa also explains "crazy wisdom" as "a crazy experience, but not exactly ego madness. It's wisdom that has gone crazy. The element of wisdom here is its playfulness, humorousness, and its sybaritic quality. Even though you are irritated and naked and completely exposed without your skin, there is a sense of joy, or more likely, bliss" (Trungpa 1994: 120). It should be noted that the term "crazy wisdom", which according to Trungpa is a translation of the Tibetan term *ye shes 'chol ba* "wisdom gone wild" (Trungpa 2001: 196), was called "new vocabulary" by the Dalai Lama (Dalai Lama, 1993, *Western Buddhist Teachers' Conference*).

[35] Roerich 1996: 132.

[36] Roerich 1996: 181.

[37] Martin 2005: 57.

[38] Martin 2005: 57.

in Tibet, and serves as a role model for monks in Tibet—once behaved in a way that does not accord with the way in which he is usually depicted.[39]

> One day the Master [Atiśa] behaved in a child-like fashion: inside his cell he discharged his bowels in small quantities all over the floor. 'Brom ston pa cleaned (the floor) well, and did not feel any disgust at the conduct (of the Master's) physical body.[40]

The story about Atiśa is not commented upon by the author, and the famous master is not called mad. It does, however, show that the mad yogins were not alone in being depicted as acting in odd and peculiar ways.

At other times, we encounter stories of people that can be classified as mad yogins, both in name and behavior. Ronald Davidson cites an episode from the autobiography of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192) where a meeting with a Buddhist master who both behaved like a madman and was called mad is portrayed.

> Then, when I [Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer] turned twenty, I heard of the fame of the precious lama Nyönpa Dönden [sMyon pa Don ldan], and an especial faith in him arose in me. [...]
>
> [H]e [sMyon pa Don ldan] took off all his clothes, and naked, grabbed my [Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer's] hand, and began to wildly jump and dance about.
>
>> Wake up, all you fortunate ones assembled here! The previous king of this border country is these days the young Nyang, with retreat hair piled on his head (*ral pa can*). The previous translator has nowadays been reborn as my crazy self. [...]
>
> So saying, he danced his crazy naked dance.[41]

It is often difficult to determine whether a person is to be regarded as a mad yogin, a madman or a yogin. The line between the categories is blurred, and different people have different opinions. John Ardussin and Lawrence Epstein have outlined the following "principal attributes of the saintly madman" of Tibet:

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[39] Atiśa came to Tibet 1042.

[40] Roerich 1996: 259; gZhon nu dpal 1984: 316–317: *lan cig gi tshe jo bos byis pa ltar mdzad nas / nang gi gnas rnams phyi sa chung ngu res bkang bas / de 'brom ston pas legs par phyags / sku'i spyod pa la ma dad pa ma skyes pas /.*

[41] Davidson 2005: 330; Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer 1978: 90–91: *de nas lo nyi shu rtsa gcig la bla ma rin po che smyon pa don ldan gyi snyan po thos nas / mos gus khyad par can skyes te / [...] gcer bur bzhengs nas bdag gis lag pa la bzung zhing bro 'khrab ste / gson dang 'dir tshogs skal ldan kun / / sngon gyi mtha' 'khob rgyal po la / / dus deng sang myang chung ral pa can / / sngon gyi sgra bsgyur lo tsā la / dus deng sang smyon pa nga 'dra byung / [...] zhes gsungs te bro 'khrab pas /.*

- A general rejection of customary behaviour which society at-large, and the monastic establishment in particular, regard as appropriate for the religious man...
- An inclination towards bizarre modes of dress...
- A disregard for the niceties of interpersonal behavior, particularly with regard to social status, modes of address, deferential behavior and so forth...
- A professed disdain for scholasticism, the study of religion through books alone...
- The use of popular poetical forms, mimes, songs, epic tales, and so forth, during the course of their preaching...
- The use of obscenity and vulgar parlance.[42]

Geoffrey Samuel adds two more attributes to the list and says that the saintly madmen "have great insight, and so are capable of seeing through other people's behavior and motivations; and they have great attainment, which is demonstrated by their magical power."[43] As we will see in Part Two all these attributes fits in very well with the way gTsang smyon is presented in the sources. I would however like to add one more attribute to the list, namely compassion. It is striking that gTsang smyon and other mad yogins are depicted as acting solely for the sake of benefitting other sentient beings.

The majority of the mad yogins that we know anything about were men, but a few women that could be classified as mad yoginīs have appeared too. One example of a female mad master of this kind is encountered in *Blue Annals*. When Atiśa visited Lhasa "a ḍākiṇī known as the 'Mad One of Lhasa' [Lha sa'i smyon ma] uttered a prediction, following which the Master was able to extract the history of Lhasa from inside a beam (in the Jo khang)."[44] This is not the only place in the *Blue Annals* where mad yoginīs are depicted; we find that the mother of a certain Kun bzang had obtained instruction in the doctrine from a nun named the "Mad bSam grub" (bSam grub smyon ma), for example.[45] Several examples of mad yoginīs are found in the "Pacification" (*zhi byed*) and "Severance" (*gcod*) traditions; for example the female founder of the *gCod* tradition, Ma gcig lab sgron (1055–1153), sometimes acted in a seemingly mad way according to her life stories.[46]

Although masters that could be classified as mad yogins (or yoginīs) appeared both during the "earlier dissemination of the [Buddhist] teaching period" (*bstan pa snga dar*) to Tibet (approximately 600–850 CE) and the

[42] Ardussi and Epstein 1978: 332–333.
[43] Samuel 1993: 303.
[44] Roerich 1996: 258; gZhon nu dpal 1984: 316: *lha sa'i smyon ma zer ba'i mkha' 'gro ma zhig gis lung bstan nas gdung gi gseb nas phyung.*
[45] Roerich 1996: 188. She is also mentioned in Dudjom Rinpoche 1991: 551.
[46] See, for example, Edou 1996: 133; Harding 2003: 68–70.

"later dissemination period" (*phyi dar*) (approximately 950–1250 CE), it should be noted that the most famous mad yogins of Tibet—who were both called madmen and acted as such—lived in the 15th and 16th centuries. It was at that time that gTsang smyon Heruka, 'Brug smyon Kun dga' legs pa (1455–1529), dBus smyon Kun dga' bzang po (1458–1532) and Thang stong rgyal po (1361–1485)[47] roamed the plateau by turns shocking, provoking, amusing and frightening those who encountered them. These figures all became well-known and are still the ones that Tibetans and others usually refer to when asked about Tibetan mad masters. While there are life stories and songs (*mgur*) attributed to each one of these four figures in existence, we know far less about the mad yogins of earlier periods.

Even if the heyday of the mad yogins seem to have been the 15th and 16th centuries, mad yogins have continued to appear in Tibet and other places where Tibetan Buddhism has spread also after that period. A few more recent examples of masters who are described as acting in crazy and unconventional ways are mKhan po Gang shar (d. 1980 or 1981),[48] mDo mkhyen brtse ye shes rdo rje (1800–1859)[49] and Nges don sgrub pa'i rdo rje (1871–1917).[50]

15th–16th Century Tibet

The period when these famous mad yogins lived was characterized by religious systematization and political fragmentation.[51] Several different local kings and leaders struggled for dominion over the different Tibetan regions during the 15th and 16th centuries. Civil wars arose from time to time in many parts of Tibet, and the Tibetans faced many difficulties.

Politically, the late 15th century was a time of transition and by the end of gTsang smyon's life, the Rin spungs pa*s* had taken over much of the power from their former overlords, the Phag mo gru pa*s*. The Rin spungs pa*s* had their capital in gTsang, and the Phag mo gru pa*s* were based in dBus. These

[47] The dates of Thang stong rgyal po's life are disputed; other dates given by Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre (TBRC) are: 1385–1509 and 1385–1464.
[48] mKhan po Gang shar was a teacher of Chögyam Trungpa who also may be regarded as a modern example of a mad yogin. For some accounts about mKhan po Gang shar and his "madness", see Jackson D. 2003: 210–214.
[49] For a *rnam thar* in Tibetan, see Ye shes rdo rje and 'Od zer mtha' yas 1997.
[50] For some examples of his "craziness," see Tobgyal 1988: 49–51. There are several other examples of masters that might qualify as mad yogins. I have heard accounts of mad yogins who are still alive, living both in Tibet and elsewhere. Nam mkha'i nor bu (1938–) describes a meeting with a mad yogin in his book *Crystal and the Way of Light*, see Norbu 1986: 68–73.
[51] It is difficult to find good and detailed overviews of this period of Tibetan history. Many studies are dated or biased. Tucci's work *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* from 1949 is still one of the most extensive studies. See also, for example, Dalai Lama, Fifth 1995: 151–190; Ehrhard forthcoming a; Jackson, D. 1989; Kapstein 2006: 95–130; Komarovski 2007: 45–57; Shakabpa 1984: 73–99; Tucci (trans.) 1971: 189–245.

two regions were often in conflict during gTsang smyon's life-time, and there were also many other wars and conflicts going on in other parts of Tibet. According to the life stories of gTsang smyon, several regions were involved in sometimes very bloody conflicts such as: Bya yul and gNyal/dMyal in Southern Tibet; Northern La stod (La stod byang) and Southern La stod (La stod lho) in Western Tibet; Gu ge and gLo (Mustang);[52] Pu rang[53] and gLo in far Western Tibet; Rin spungs and rGyal rtse in Central Tibet, and so forth.

If the political climate was characterized by conflict and fragmentation, the religious climate was characterized by systematization and institutionalization. Tibetan Buddhism had already firmly taken root in Tibetan soil during the 15th century, but the previously close contact with Buddhist countries such as China, India and Central Asia had almost ended. The major traditions of Tibetan Buddhism—rNying ma, bKa' brgyud, Sa skya and dGe lugs—were well established, and the schools became increasingly institutionalized and clearly defined during this period. The dGe lugs pa, or dGa' ldan pa school as it was originally called, was relatively new and steadily gained followers and influence. This school was not a separate religious tradition when it arose in the late 14th and early 15th centuries, but by the late 15th century it had developed into a separate tradition, sometimes involved in polemics with the other (older) traditions of Tibetan Buddhism.[54] The bKa' gdams pa tradition had lost some of its former prominence, but remained incorporated in other schools, most notably in bKa' brgyud and dGe lugs. Other traditions that were important were the Jo nang pa, Zhwa lu pa and Bo dong pa.[55] Besides these schools, all of which had their own monasteries and monks, other traditions, such as Zhi byed, the Aural Transmission lineage of Ras chung, and gCod centered on particular practices, and were transmitted by wandering yogins. These three traditions, like the bKa' gdams pa, were gradually incorporated into the other traditions and ceased to exist as separate schools.

Political and religious interests were intimately intertwined and the Buddhist traditions allied themselves with local rulers who thus became their patrons. This "patron-priest" relationship (*mchod yon*) was often crucial for

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[52] This place is sometimes spelled bLo in the sources but I will consistently spell it gLo.

[53] There are several different ways to spell this name, other spellings often encountered is sPu rangs and Pu hrangs. For the sake of consistency I will spell it Pu rang.

[54] The tradition's founder, Tsong kha pa, probably never saw his group as separate from the Sa skya tradition to which he and most of his followers belonged (Dreyfuss 2003: 26).

[55] The Bon tradition also existed, but it is seldom mentioned in the materials on which this study is based. Zhwa lu/Zha lu is a school named after the Zha lu monastery in gTsang and it resembles the Sa skya school. The alternative name Bu pa, after the schools founder Bu ston rin chen grub (1290–1364) is also sometimes encountered. For Bu ston's *rnam thar* in English, see Seyfort Ruegg 1966. For information about Jo nang, see Stearns 2007. For information about the Bo dong tradition, see Diemberger et al. 1997.

both parties.[56] Monks and yogins needed patronage to obtain dwelling places, books, clothing, food and places to congregate; and the rulers could legitimize their position by acting as dharma kings (*chos rgyal*, *dharmarāja*). Moreover, Buddhism could sometimes serve as a stabilizing factor in troubled times. The symbiotic relationship between religious and worldly leaders gave rise to a sectarian and competitive climate among the different Buddhist schools.[57]

The many conflicts and problems of the 15th and 16th centuries can easily overshadow the less negative aspects of the period. It was also a time of important cultural, religious, artistic and architectural developments. Many texts of great significance were composed and printed, extraordinary buildings were erected, and outstanding works of art were produced. The period when gTsang smyon and the other mad yogins lived was thus very creative and dynamic. Hildegard Diemberger has highlightened this aspect of the period, and she compares it with the Italian renaissance.

> There were some parallels between this fragmented but intellectually productive Tibet and Italy in the same period, with its political fragmentation into city-states and its extraordinary artistic and scientific productivity. Patronage of the arts and sciences became an important factor for the competing polities, leading to the so-called "campanilismo" of the Italian Renaissance and bringing to the fore figures like Leonardo da Vinci, sometimes compared by Western scholars of Tibetan history to a Tibetan spiritual master, inventor, and artist of the same period named Thangtong Gyalpo, famous for his construction of iron-chain bridges over the Brahmaputra River as well as for his support of arts and drama.[58] In both cases, artists and scholars had to act strategically in accepting or refusing patronage, collaborating, and negotiating constantly shifting allegiances. However, they also enjoyed the relative freedom from a hegemonic power, which [...] had an important effect on creativity.[59]

The Mad Yogins of the 15th–16th Centuries

It is within this historical framework that we must include the above-mentioned mad yogins if we are to understand them. They participated in and constituted an important part of the 15th and 16th century Tibetan religious, political and social landscape.

[56] For more information about the *mchod yon* relationship, see, for example, Seyfort Ruegg 1995.

[57] For example: when the Phag mo gru pas and Rin spungs pas started to fight for political hegemony, the schools they supported, dGe lugs pa and Karma bKa' brgyud became involved in the conflict too.

[58] It should be noted that Thang stong rgyal po was one of the above-mentioned mad yogins.

[59] Diemberger 2007: 33.

The mad yogins were involved in several different polemics. They were involved in inter-sectarian polemics against the newly founded dGe lugs tradition, which was on the rise and steadily gaining new followers. The dGe lugs pa adherents often stressed that a thorough monastic background was needed before the tantric practices were applied, and they were often more inclined towards scholarly pursuits than the mad yogins. The mad yogins, on the other hand, often criticized the learned monks and portrayed them as arrogant and greedy. Although it is not always explicitly stated, it is sometimes apparent that the target of the mad yogins' polemics was dGe lugs pa *dge bshes*.[60] Instead of emphasizing monkhood, like Tsong Khapa (1375–1419) had done, the role model for the mad yogins was the tantric siddha (*grub thob*), and like the Indian siddhas they often acted in a transgressive and provocative fashion.

The mad yogins were also involved in intra-sectarian polemics and seem to have disliked the way in which the bKa' brgyud tradition had developed.[61] From having been a yogin-oriented group of practitioners who did not care about worldly activities, the bKa' brgyud school had become a monastic institution with hereditary lineages.[62] In some ways the bKa' brgyud pa*s* had thus abandoned the lifestyle of the early founders of their tradition, and the mad yogins advocated a return to that original lifestyle. Milarepa, Marpa and the Indian siddhas were the key symbols of the kind of lifestyle they advocated.

In their quest for enlightenment the mad yogins followed a specific discipline, often called "disciplined conduct" (*brtul zhugs*) that is radically different from the discipline of the monks. Practising this discipline (*brtul zhugs spyod pa*) sometimes involved conduct that seemed crazy (*smyo ba*). This led people to call those who practised Buddhism in this way "madmen" (*smyon pa*), and their conduct separated them from, and at times even upset, other Buddhists, not least the monk-scholars. The mad masters were yogins (*rnal 'byor pa*) who preferred practising meditation in isolated mountain retreats and wandering around as homeless beggars, rather than studying in monasteries. Their highly unorthodox and often bizarre manners separated them not only from the monks but also from other yogins, and the label "mad yogin" (*rnal 'byor smyon pa*), or simply "madman" (*smyon pa*) was sometimes used. Despite being just a few colorful vagabonds with outra-

[60] *dGe bshes* means "virtuous friend" (*kalyāṇamitra*) which is a general designation for a Buddhist teacher, often a learned monk. In the dGe lugs pa tradtion the term was used as an academic title for those who had done extensive studies and had passed certain examinations. However, it is important to keep in mind that the title *dge bshes* also was used for monk-scholars in other schools.

[61] This is discussed by Smith, 2001: 60.

[62] bKa brgyud institutional development happened early. For example, already by the 13th century sTag lung was said to be the largest monastery in Central Tibet.

geous manners, these *smyon pas* became influential and important in several ways, and their legacy still remains intact.

Mad yogins exist in all the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, but most of them belonged to or were affiliated with traditions that focused on meditation rather than studies. The famous mad yogins often belonged to or had affiliations with some of the many bKa' brgyud branches—the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud branch in particular.[63] We also find many mad yogins in the Zhi byed/gCod tradition and in the rNying ma tradition. Especially among the treasure revealers (*gter ston*) several mad yogins are found.[64]

A Survey of Previous Studies about gTsang smyon

gTsang smyon was virtually unknown in the West before rGod tshang ras pa's *rnam thar* of him was published in India in 1969.[65] Apart from a few learned Tibetans, not many knew anything about gTsang smyon at that time. But, when *The Life of the Saint of gTsang by rGod tshang ras pa sna tshogs rang grol* was published some Western scholars became aware of him. The publication made the most extensive *rnam thar* about gTsang smyon available in the Tibetan language and—more importantly in terms of the reception of gTsang smyon in the West—it includes a very informative English preface by E. Gene Smith.[66] In this preface Smith introduces the mad yogins of Tibet in general and gTsang smyon in particular. It also contains a detailed description of "the architecture of the biography", where Smith summarizes the contents of each chapter in the *Heart of the Sun*.[67] This summary is of tremendous help for anyone studying the Tibetan text. Moreover, the preface contains appendices that outline the different editions of the life story and song collection of Milarepa that gTsang smyon had compiled,[68] and also of other bKa' brgyud pa hagiographic works that were compiled and printed by "gTsang smyon and his school".[69] Jeffrey Hopkins aptly asserts that it is truly remarkable "how well these early studies have stood the test of time, the way they still provide countless jumping-off points for further research and reflection."[70] The essay about gTsang smyon was later republished together with other essays by Smith under the title *Among Ti-*

[63] Three of the four above-mentioned *smyon pas* belonged to the bKa' brgyud tradition, and the fourth, Thang stong rgyal po, who is generally regarded as a rNying ma pa, is also counted as a lineage holder of the Shangs pa bKa' brgyud tradition. For information about the Shangs pa bKa' brgyud, see, for example, Smith 2001: 53–57.
[64] See, for example, Stearns 2007: 62.
[65] rGod tshang ras pa sNa tshogs rang grol 1969.
[66] Smith 1969.
[67] Smith 1969: 6–12.
[68] Smith 1969: 17–22.
[69] Smith 1969: 23–31.
[70] Hopkins 2001: x.

betan Texts.[71] Thanks to this publication, Smith's essay about gTsang smyon became more accessible and it lost some of the "cult status" that the few copies printed in India had developed among those interested in Tibetan studies.[72] Smith's essay is no doubt an excellent starting point for anyone interested in gTsang smyon and his tradition, and it has been one of the points of departure for this study as well.[73]

Gene Smith was one of the first to discover and present gTsang smyon in the West, but there are a few scattered references to him which predate Smith's essay. Before describing the gTsang smyon studies that followed the essay, I will summarize some of these early references.

In Sarat Chandra Das's Tibetan-English dictionary first published in 1902, the following information is provided about mKhar kha: "the birthplace of *Grub chen* gTsang smyon He ru ka, one of the celebrated Buddhist *Tantrik* saints of Tsang."[74] Das was perhaps the first person to mention gTsang smyon to an English-speaking audience, and the reference to him makes it plausible that gTsang smyon was known, at least locally, in Tibet when Das visited the country. As far as I know, it was not until several years later that gTsang smyon's name again appeared in a book written in a Western language. This time (1958), his name appeared in a translated guidebook to the holy places of central Tibet.[75] In a note to the translated passage, the book's translator, Alfonsa Ferrari, cites the information from Das's dictionary, and she also assumes that gTsang smyon could be identical with a certain sMyon pa ldom chung of Upper sMyang who is mentioned in the *Blue Annals*.[76] gTsang smyon was apparently still little known when Ferrari translated the pilgrimage guide, and we now know that he is not identical with sMyon pa ldom chung.[77] Rolf Stein provided an important piece of information when he identified gTsang smyon as the author of the life stories about Marpa and Milarepa in 1962.[78] The same year Garma C.C. Chang, who translated the song collection of Milarepa into English, asserted that "it was the fabulous and mysterious yogi, gTsang smyon Heruka—'The Mad Yogi from gTsang'" who had authored or compiled the text.[79] Chang, moreover, stated that gTsang smyon was a disciple of Phag mo gru pa (1110–1170) and

[71] Smith 2001.
[72] Schaeffer 2001: 3.
[73] My supervisor had *The Life of the Saint of gTsang by rGod tshang ras pa sna tshogs rang grol* in his room and showed it to me when I was an undergraduate student in the Dept. of History of Religions, Stockholm University. This contributed to my decision to write a dissertation about gTsang smyon.
[74] Das 1998 [1902]: 182.
[75] Ferrari 1958: 51.
[76] Ferrari 1958: 127, n. 266.
[77] The information about this master in *the Blue Annals* clearly reveals that the person in question is not gTsang smyon. See, Roerich 1996 [1949]: 1030.
[78] Stein 1962: 237. The book later appeared in English translation, Stein 1988 [1972]: 276.
[79] Chang (trans.) 1989 [1962]: 688.

as did Herbert V. Guenther with whom Chang corresponded.[80] In the introduction to *The Life and Teaching of Nāropa* the book's author, Guenther, wrote that Lha btsun "was a contemporary of the famous saint gTsang pa smyon pa'i He ru ka who according to tradition was one of the disciples of dPal Phag mo gru pa, who in turn was a disciple of sGam po pa."[81] Both Guenther and Chang thus believed that gTsang smyon lived during the 12th century. Stein also had problems determining when gTsang smyon lived and asserted that gTsang smyon lived in the fourteenth century.[82]

Before Smith's essay and the publication of the *Heart of the Sun*, very little was therefore known about gTsang smyon, and many uncertainties and much misinformation were in circulation. With Smith's essay the situation changed and a more accurate and less mysterious picture of the mad yogin started to emerge. As mentioned, the doors also opened for further studies. But it took more than fifteen years until the time was ripe for Ilze Maruta Stearns [Kalnins] to take another step towards fuller knowledge of gTsang smyon.

In her master's thesis *The Life of gTsang-smyon Heruka: A Study of Divine Madness* Stearns [Kalnins] makes a thorough investigation of gTsang smyon. She focuses on gTsang smyon as a "divine madman" and also on his connection with Milarepa and his creation of Milarepa's life story and song collection. Like Smith before her, Stearns's main source is the *Heart of the Sun* by rGod tshang ras pa.[83] To a lesser degree both of them also used the *Life Story which Causes the Body-Hairs to Flutter* by Lha btsun. Although both of them knew about its existence, neither of them had access to the the *Lion of Faith* by dNgos grub dpal 'bar when writing.[84] Stearns [Kalnins] made a careful summary of the contents of *The Heart of the Sun* with the help of the *Life Story which Causes the Body-Hairs to Flutter*. She also translated sections of both *rnam thars* and, last but not least, translated two complete songs of gTsang smyon.[85]

The year after Ilze Maruta Stearns's [Kalnins] master's thesis was completed, the Nālandā Translation Committee wrote a few pages about gTsang smyon based on Smith's essay in the introduction to their translation of gTsang smyon's *Life of Marpa*.[86]

Subsequently, two different Ph.D. dissertations that deal with gTsang smyon and his life story of Milarepa appeared. Robert Everett Goss wrote a dissertation titled *The Hermeneutics of Madness: A Literary and Herme-*

[80] Chang (trans.) 1989 [1962]: 688.
[81] Guenther 1986 [1963]: xv.
[82] Stein 1962: 237; Stein 1988 [1972]: 276.
[83] Smith's work mainly focuses on rGod tshang ras pa's text, which is natural since his article originally served as an introduction to an edition of the text.
[84] The present dissertation thus complements them in this regard.
[85] I have also translated one of the songs in Chapter 7.
[86] Nālandā Translation Committee 1986: xx–xxiv.

neutical Analysis of the "Mi la'i rnam-thar" by gTsang smyon Heruka, and Andrew Quintman recently wrote a dissertation named *Mi la ras pa's Many Lives: Anatomy of a Tibetan Biographical Corpus*.[87]

Goss has some interesting theories about why gTsang smyon portrayed Milarepa as he did, but he has not investigated previous life stories of Milarepa nor has he studied the life stories of gTsang smyon. Instead he focuses on the translated texts—especially gTsang smyon's life story of Milarepa, but his analysis is weakened by the fact that he has not studied the many Tibetan texts that are associated with Milarepa and gTsang smyon.

Quintman, on the other hand, has done a very thorough investigation of previous Milarepa accounts and he is therefore able to make a much more in-depth analysis of gTsang smyon's version of the text. Besides that, Quintman has also carefully studied the sections of the life stories about gTsang smyon that deal with Milarepa. In his dissertation he gives several reasons why gTsang smyon's version of Milarepa's life became such a success, and he shows how it differs from older versions. Quintman has also translated some sections of rGod tshang ras pa's and Lha btsun's life stories of gTsang smyon. Quintman's study resembles Stearns's [Kalnins] work insofar as both investigate how gTsang smyon presented Milarepa and both have sometimes translated the same or similar passages of the life stories.

There is also an article by the Italian scholar Kristin Blancke which focuses on gTsang smyon's way of presenting Milarepa. The article is called "The Personal Contribution of gTsang smyon He ru ka in the *Mi la'i rnam mgur*" and it was the first of a planned series of articles that unfortunately have never been published.[88]

Kurtis Schaeffer has written two articles that concern gTsang smyon. In the article "Dying like Milarépa: Death Accounts in a Tibetan Hagiographic Tradition" he describes the death scene in the *Heart of the Sun* and compares it with the death scene of Milarepa as gTsang smyon described it, and also with the death scene of bSod nams blo gros who was a disciple of gTsang smyon.[89] Schaeffer thus concentrates on gTsang smyon's last days and his death. This is an aspect that has not been covered in other gTsang smyon studies, and he contributes an interesting analysis and useful information. The second article that Schaeffer has written is perhaps even more important since it provides us with a substantial investigation of the literature that gTsang smyon and his disciples printed during and after gTsang smyon's lifetime. It was during the 11th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS), Bonn 2006, that Schaeffer presented this paper and it will be published in the forthcoming proceedings of the seminar. The title

[87] Goss 1993; Quintman 2006.

[88] Blancke, unpublished. Blancke kindly sent me the first of these planned articles. Blancke has translated gTsang smyon's *Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* into Italian (Blancke, Kristin and Pizzi, Franco (trans.) 2002).

[89] Schaeffer 2007.

of the paper is "The Printing Projects of Tsangnyön Heruka and his Disciples" and it contains a thorough investigation of the extant prints that gTsang smyon and his disciples produced. In an appendix to his article Schaeffer presents a list of the block-prints of gTsang smyon's tradition that were printed at Brag dkar rta so, Ras chung phug and elsewhere. The list supplements the one that Gene Smith published in 1969, and it provides important bibliographic reference points for further specialized studies.[90]

During the IATS seminar I presented a paper on gTsang smyon that also will be published in the forthcoming proceedings. The paper was titled: "What Do the Childhood and Early Life of gTsang smyon Heruka Tell us about his bKa' brgyud Affiliation?"[91] As the title indicates, the paper is about the early life of gTsang smyon, from his birth up to his early twenties, and a description of how gTsang smyon gradually became a bKa' brgyud pa purist. Another short article titled "The Mad Heruka from gTsang: Madness as a Buddhist Practice" will be published in *Tibet Journal*. This article is based on a paper presented at the XIVth Conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies in London 2005. In this article I present some preliminary observations about gTsang smyon and his mad form of practice, observations that are developed and deepened in the present dissertation.[92]

Besides these studies where gTsang smyon figures prominently, there are others written by scholars focusing on other things but whose studies have touched upon him, his tradition, and/or his disciples.

Peter Alan Roberts wrote a Ph.D. thesis about the life stories of Ras chung pa that was later published.[93] This study provides a thorough investigation of the hagiographical traditions of Milarepa's disciple Ras chung pa and it resembles Quintman's study of Milarepa. Roberts investigates how the life stories of Ras chung pa have changed and developed. Since gTsang smyon was a lineage holder of Ras chung's Aural Transmissions, and since he and his disciples wrote and printed many major works about or associated with Ras chung pa, both gTsang smyon and his disciples figure prominently in Roberts's study.

Another scholar who has written a dissertation and several articles related to gTsang smyon and his disciples is Marta Sernesi. Her dissertation—*The Aural Transmission of Saṃvara and Ras chung pa's Legacy*—is a thorough study of the Aural Transmissions of the bKa' brgyud school. Since gTsang smyon was both a lineage holder of one of the more important branches of this tradition and also made a compilation of texts from the Aural Transmission, he and his disciples figure in it.[94]

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[90] Schaeffer, forthcoming.
[91] Larsson, forthcoming a.
[92] Larsson, forthcoming b.
[93] Roberts 2000; Roberts 2007.
[94] Sernesi 2007 a. Sernesi presented a paper at the IATS seminar 2006 where she makes a preliminary presentation of the Aural Transmission, and she has also written an article titled

Franz-Karl Ehrhard has written much about traditions, places, texts and people associated with gTsang smyon and/or his disciples. Ehrhard is currently preparing an article on gTsang smyon's disciple rGod tshang ras pa, and his many studies provide much detailed information taken from rare Tibetan sources.[95]

Some studies that deal with gTsang smyon's trips to, and activities in, Nepal have also been done. rGod tshang ras pa's description of gTsang smyon's second visit to Nepal has been translated by Lewis and Jamspal, and Alexander von Rospatt has described gTsang smyon's renovation of the Svayambhū Stūpa.[96]

Several historians have used the *Heart of the Sun* as a source. David Jackson has translated an amusing section of it in his *A History of Tibetan Painting*.[97] Luciano Petech used it when he wrote about Ya tshe, Gu ge and Pu rang,[98] as did Roberto Vitali in his study of Gu ge and Pu rang.[99]

It is noteworthy that most scholars have used the *Heart of the Sun* by rGod tshang ras pa to obtain information about gTsang smyon, and some have also used the *Life story which Causes the Body-Hairs of the Faithful to Flutter* by Lha btsun. As far as I know, nobody has made use of the the *Lion of Faith* that was written by dNgos grub dpal 'bar.[100] In this dissertation I will use the *Lion of Faith* extensively, and I will focus on gTsang smyon's first thirty years, a period that has not previously been covered in detail in Western scholarship.

Sources and Studies about the other Famous Mad Yogins

As mentioned above, gTsang smyon was not the only mad yogin in Tibet. Three other famous *smyon pa*s lived at approximately the same time period, 'Brug pa kun legs, dBus smyon Kun dga' bzang po and Thang stong rgyal po. There are life stories about each one of these figures, and we can therefore compare them with gTsang smyon. Such a comparison could provide much interesting information about the mad yogins and also about the historical period when they lived. Although such a comparison will not be made

"Milarepa's Six Secret Songs: The Early Transmission of the *bDe-mchog snyan-brgyud*." Recently she has been working on a Cakrasaṃvara text authored by gTsang smyon's disciple rGod tshang ras pa, and she is also preparing an article where she will focus on gTsang smyon as a master of the Aural Transmission.

[95] Ehrhard 2000; Ehrhard 2004 b, c; Ehrhard forthcoming b, c.

[96] Lewis and Jamspal 1988; Rospatt 2001.

[97] Jackson, D. 1996: 73–74. This section is paraphrased in Chapter 7.

[98] Petech 1980.

[99] Vitali 1996.

[100] However, some scholars have referred to it.

in this study a few words about the available sources and studies about these fascinating figures will be provided.

'Brug pa kun legs is one of the most famous mad yogins, and this is reflected in the many songs and stories that are attributed to him, both in oral and written form. The oldest and most reliable text is probably his *Collected Works* (*gsung 'bum*) that most likely was compiled in Dri'u lhas in south-eastern Tibet in 1592.[101] The biographical material that is included in this collection is written in the form of an autobiography (*rang gi rnam thar*), but this does not necessarily reflect the actual way it was composed. It is unlikely that the life story was written by 'Brug pa kun legs himself.[102] The *Collected Works* of 'Brug pa kun legs consists of four different sections of different lengths and with different titles.[103] The parts are enumerated according to Tibetan custom with letters instead of numbers. Thus the first part is *ka*, the second *kha*, the third *ga* and the fourth *nga*. The first two parts—*ka* and *kha*—have been translated, and it is in these that most of the biographical material is found. The first volume—*ka*—is the most extensive (169 folios) and has been translated into French by Rolf Stein in his *Vie et chants de 'Brug-pa kun-legs le yogin*.[104] Stein's work is still one of the most important studies that have been done in the West on a particular mad yogin.[105] His translation is preceded by an introduction, and he also provides the reader with helpful notes in the translated text itself.

A section of the second part—*kha*—of 'Brug pa kun legs' *Collected Works* was translated in John Ardussi's master's thesis *'Brug pa kun legs, the Saintly Tibetan Madman*.[106] Ardussi's work—together with Ilze Maruta Stearns's master's thesis—is one of the few studies that have been done in English on a mad yogin.

There is also a rather extensive oral tradition that is attributed to 'Brug pa kun legs.[107] Many of these stories are quite different from the ones found in the *Collected Works* and resemble "dirty stories" (*btsog gtam*). Some of the

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[101] Ardussi 1972: 75.

[102] Ardussi 1972: 1; Stein 1972: 25.

[103] Several different editions of this text have been published in Tibetan. Some examples are found in the Bibliography, 'Brug pa kun legs 1972; 'Brug pa kun legs 1974; 'Brug pa kun legs 1978; 'Brug pa kun legs 2005.

[104] Stein 1972. The Tibetan title of the work is *rNal 'byor pa'i ming can kun dga' legs pa'i rnam thar byung tshul lhug par smras pa zhib mo'i rtsing mo ha le ho le sna zin spu zin nas bkod pa ces bya ba*. For a review of Stein's book, see Jamyang Namgyal (Gene E. Smith) 1973.

[105] The Tibetan text of the first volume (*ka*) that Stein translated has been published in *Zentralasiatische studien*, no 8. 1974. A vocabulary with words and their meaning in French is found in *Zentralasiatische studien*, no 7, 1973, "Vocabulaire tibétain de la Biographie de 'Brug-pa Kun-legs," pp. 129–178.

[106] Ardussi 1972.

[107] An example of a 'Brug pa kun legs story is found in Das 1970: 92–94. I have taken some of the information about 'Brug pa kun legs from Stein's introduction to *Vie et chants de 'Brug-pa kun-legs le yogin*, Stein 1972: 3–27.

stories are similar to the popular stories about the notorious A khu ston pa—"the uncle teacher"—with the notable difference that the latter is not a historic person.[108] These stories are often so obscene and/or offensive that it is hard to incorporate them within a traditional Buddhist framework. Some of the stories can, however, with a little good will, be interpreted as Buddhist teachings. Still others are clearly Buddhist in content, and do not differ from stories of Milarepa and other less controversial figures. Many of these types of stories where 'Brug pa kun legs figures, after having been transmitted orally for centuries, were eventually written down. This kind of literature is frowned upon by some learned Tibetan lamas, while others accept them as being authentic descriptions of the activities of an enlightened adept. Many of these books have been produced in Bhutan where 'Brug pa Kun legs is particularly popular and important. An example of this type is a life story called *The Essence of the Ocean which is Meaningful to Behold: the Life Story of Kun dga' legs pa, the Protector of Beings* by dGe bshes Brag phug dGe 'dun rin chen (1926–). This text was published for the first time in 1966 in Bhutan[109] and is available in English translation, and could therefore easily be compared with Stein's and Ardussi's translations of the older and more historically reliable life story that was produced in Tibet.[110] There is also a German translation of yet another life story of 'Brug pa kun legs.[111]

Another important figure who is sometimes counted as a mad yogin is the famous builder of iron suspension bridges, Thang stong rgyal po. The main life story about him is titled *All-illuminating Mirror of Jewels: A Biography of the Glorious Lord of Siddhas bTson 'grus bzang po*.[112] Cyrus Stearns recently translated this important text. It was published as *King of the Empty Plain: The Tibetan Iron-Bridge Builder*.[113] This work, together with Stein's book on 'Brug pa kun legs, is one of the most important studies that has been done on a mad yogin. It is carefully notated and contains an extensive introduction. The introduction of the book includes a twenty-two-page-long sec-

[108] A khu ston pa is an interesting figure, and a book with A khu ston pa stories in English is available (Rinjing Dorje 1997). The older edition of this book from 1975 contains a couple of stories that were excised in the 1997 reprint. The reason for this must no doubt have been that these stories were particularly offensive. An article by Kun mchog dge legs, dPal ldan bkra shis and Kevin Stewart (1999) explores 'Brug pa kun legs, A khu ston pa and some other popular figures.

[109] *'Gro ba'i mgon po chos rje kun dga' legs pa'i rnam thar rgya mtsho'i snying po mthong ba don ldan*. A revised and expanded version of this text was later published in Kalimpong, see Brag phug dge bshes dGe 'dun rin chen 1971 in the Bibliography.

[110] Dowman and Paljor 1983.

[111] *Chos rje kun legs kyi rnam par thar pa rgyas pa lho'i skor* (*The Dharma Lord 'Brug pa kun legs Extensive Liberation-story, the Southern Collection*), Kretschmar 1981. That there are many life stories about this particular mad yogin is further exemplified by another *rnam thar* in Tibetan that was published in Dharamsala (*'Gro ba'i mgon po kun dga' legs pa'i rnam thar mon spa gro sogs kyi mdzad spyod rnams* 1981).

[112] *dPal grub pa'i dbang phyug btson 'grus bzang po'i rnam par thar pa kun gsal nor bu'i me long*, 'Gyur med bde chen, Lo chen 1976 [1609].

[113] Stearns 2007.

tion about the mad yogins of Tibet.[114] In this section Stearns has analyzed the mad yogins and their way of practice. He also gives many examples of "deliberate behavior" (*brtul zhugs spyod pa*), the key technical term used for the seemingly mad behavior of the mad yogins.[115] The book is an extension of Stearns's master's thesis about Thang stong rgyal po.[116] Janet Gyatso wrote a Ph.D. dissertation about Thang stong rgyal po which focuses on the visionary revelations that he experienced.[117]

dBus smyon kun dga' bzang po is the least known mad yogin nowadays. Previously he was quite famous however, and he is often referred to in older texts. Lha mthong lo tsa ba bShes gnyen rnam rgyal (1512–?) wrote a *rnam thar* about him, but very few studies have been done on this interesting figure.[118] Franz-Karl Ehrhard is one of the few scholars who have devoted attention to him. He has written an article that focuses on dBus smyon's relationships with the Tibetan rulers of the 15th and 16th centuries.[119]

Other Western-Language Studies of Mad Yogins

Besides the above-mentioned studies that focus on the most famous mad yogins, a few articles and sections of books have appeared over the years that shed some light on the mad yogins of Tibet and their practice in a more general way.

An often quoted study is Ardussi and Epstein's article "The Saintly madman in Tibet" in *Himalayan Anthropology* from 1978.[120] This article, and the above-mentioned essay by Smith, are probably the most cited texts when the mad yogins of Tibet are described. Ardussi and Epstein's article contains several interesting observations about the mad yogins and their list of "the principal attributes of the saintly madman" is particularly relevant.[121] In his article "Elements, Insanity and Subjectivity" David Germano describes how "craziness" could be used as a practice in the "extraordinary preliminaries" which lead to "direct transcendence" (*thod rgal*) in the rNying ma tradition. This is the only study that I know of which describes how mad practice is applied in the Ancient Tradition.[122]

114 Stearns 2007: 58–80.
115 I translate the term: "disciplined coduct".
116 Stearns 1980.
117 Gyatso 1981. There are also several articles about Thang stong rgyal po. See, for example, Gyatso 1980; Gyatso 1986; Kahlen 1993.
118 Lha mthong lo tsa ba bshes gnyen rnam rgyal 1972 [1494].
119 Ehrhard, forthcoming a.
120 Ardussi and Epstein 1978. For a short article about the madman and fool in Buddhism, with an emphasis on Chinese Buddhism, see Silver 1987.
121 Ardussi and Epstein 1978: 332–334. This list was cited above, see p. 16.
122 Germano 1997.

The mad yogins are usually absent in books about Tibetan Buddhism, but some authors have written briefly about them. Geoffrey Samuel devotes a chapter of his book *Civilized Shamans* to "Folk Shamans, *Tertön*, and Crazy Siddhas"[123] and describes the mad yogins as "a shamanic critique of clericalization."[124] Samuel also describes gTsang smyon briefly.[125] His book is important because it describes the non-monastic—or as he calls it "shamanistic"—side of Buddhism that has often been neglected. Rolf Stein provides a brief discussion of the mad yogins in his book *Tibetan Civilization* and, as mentioned above, he was one of the first Western scholars who described them and held them to be important.[126] In his book about the Tibetan renaissance, Ronald Davidson mentions that, based on his understanding of the documents he has studied, he has traced a fairly large number of loosely associated actors who were instrumental to the Buddhist revival during the so-called Tibetan renaissance.[127] One such group was the crazy yogins:

> Fourth, there were the crazy yogins (*smyong ba*),[128] invoking the behavior of Mila Repa or other wandering tantrikas constructing a Tibetan version of Indian siddha behavior. Some were occasionally on a continuum with the popular preachers, and their songs had wide appeal. Others were more closely related to the Indian or Nepalese siddhas wandering in and out of Tibet, such as Padampa Sangyé or Gayādhara.[129]

The essays, pictures and statues contained in the book *Holy Madness: Portraits of Tantric Siddhas* shows the link between the Indian siddhas and the Tibetan mad yogins.[130] Many of these short essays deal with the mad yogins of Tibet, and the book also contains a picture of a statue of gTsang smyon.[131]

The Tibetan lama Chögyam Trungpa (Chos rgyam drung pa, 1940–1987) who is famous for popularizing Buddhism in the West wrote a book titled *Crazy Wisdom* and he has described what he called "crazy wisdom" in some of his other books as well.[132] Several Tibetan lamas and some of Trungpa's disciples have stated that Trungpa was a mad yogin in his own right. There are several books describing his outrageous actions, books that enable us to

[123] Samuel 1993: 290–308 (Samuel's italics).
[124] Samuel 1993: 518.
[125] Samuel 1993: 519–521.
[126] Stein 1988: 275–276.
[127] Davidson 2005: 10.
[128] Should be *smyon pa*.
[129] Davidson 2005: 11.
[130] This book is a catalogue which was published in conjunction with an exhibition organized by the Rubin Museum of Art, New York, in 2006. Linrothe, Rob (ed.) 2006.
[131] See especially the essays by Kapstein, Martin, Samuel and Smith. The statue is found on page 373 (Cat. No. 82).
[132] Trungpa 1991; Trungpa 1994; Trungpa 2001.

compare Trungpa's actions with the behavior of the mad yogins of former times.[133]

[133] See, for example, Miles 1989; Midal 2004; Mukpo and Gimian 2006; Perks 2006. There is also an interesting German translation of a life story of the the mad Mongolian master Schagdar who was seen as an incarnation of the mad Chinese monk Ji gong (von Walter Heissig 1962).

Chapter 2: Main Sources

Life Stories

The main sources of this study belong to the so-called *rnam thar* literary genre.[134] *rNam thar* is a short form of *rnam par thar pa* and translates the Sanskrit *vimokṣa*.[135] Its literal meaning—"complete liberation"—reveals what this form of literature is generally about, namely outlining a certain individual's path to liberation (*thar pa, mokṣa*). "Liberation" in this context means liberation from cyclic existence and its various kinds of suffering. *Thar pa* is synonymous with enlightenment, and the *rnam thar* literature thus usually describes the path to enlightenment. Although this is typically the case, the term is also sometimes used for a biography in a more general sense. Jäschke translates *rnam par thar pa* with "biography", "legendary tale about a saint", "tale", "story" and "description in general".[136] However, the *rnam thar*s that I have used "share the presumption—or at least the suggestion—that the protagonist reached full liberation", as Janet Gyatso has aptly expressed it.[137]

The most obvious model for Buddhist "liberation accounts" is the life story of the historical Buddha. The description of how Buddha Śākyamuni became enlightened—and thus reached complete liberation (*rnam par thar pa*)—is central in Buddhism; indeed, one might even say that the life of the Buddha forms the heart or foundation of Buddhism. After all Buddhism does concern and describe a path to enlightenment. Buddha is therefore both the source and goal of Buddhism, and a buddha teaches not only through his teaching but also through his personal example—his life. It is therefore not surprising that the followers of Buddha Śākyamuni wanted to preserve his memory and composed accounts of his life. Various biographical fragments are found in the canonical texts but a full life story was not completed until several centuries after his passing into final nirvana. The earliest extant biographical composition that depicts his whole life—from birth to death—was written in the first century CE by Aśvaghoṣa. Aśvaghoṣa's life story of the

[134] For a general overview of the *rnam thar*-literature, see Tucci 1949: 139–150; Vostrikov 1970: 180–198.

[135] *Vimokṣa* does not denote a literary genre, however, but the Buddhist ideal of liberation.

[136] Jäschke 1977: 314.

[137] Gyatso 1998: 103.

Buddha—*Buddhacarita*[138]—was translated into Tibetan, and together with *Lalitavistara*[139] and other accounts of the life of the Buddha it probably served as a prototype for the Tibetan *rnam thar* literature.[140] Besides showing how amazing and fantastic the Buddha was, the life stories also serve as pedagogical devices. A Buddhist practitioner has much to learn from the life of the Buddha, and it is important to keep in mind that for a Buddhist the Buddha was not only an exceptional individual worthy of praise but also someone that an aspirant to enlightenment should follow and emulate. His life story presents the Buddhist teachings in the form of a personal example, and this way of teaching is sometimes easier to understand than theoretical expositions of the Dharma. Many basic Buddhist doctrines, such as renunciation, karma, samsara, nirvana and reincarnation are clearly revealed in his life story.

John S. Strong has pointed out that Buddha's life story reflects a biographical paradigm, a buddha-life blueprint, which all buddhas follow.[141] Consequently, if buddhahood is to be obtained, his life should be emulated. The "buddha-life blueprint" also became very important when biographical accounts of subsequent masters were written down. By incorporating elements and themes from the life of the Buddha in the description of the life of a specific individual, the charisma of the Buddha rubbed off on to the one who was being portrayed, and the effect of this was two-fold. On the one hand, it proved the validity of the Buddhist teaching, and the individual became an example that proved that it was possible, even in later times, to reach liberation by practising Buddhism. On the other hand, it also proved to others that the individual, his lineage, and disciples were genuine and worthy of support and devotion. Janet Gyatso has noted that "autobiography and biography reflect the competitive climate of Tibetan sectarian politics", and this aspect of a hagiography is important to bear in mind.[142] Sometimes a *rnam thar* was written primarily as a kind of propagandistic device that served to strengthen the position of a specific lineage, lama and/or monastery.

Strong describes how the bio-blueprint gradually became quite detailed and specific.[143] The Tibetan tradition enumerates "Twelve Great Acts" of a

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[138] *Sangs rgyas kyi spyod pa shes bya'i snyan dngags chen po.*

[139] *'Phags pa rgya cher rol pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo.*

[140] The latter is more embellished and became particularly influential within the Mahāyāna tradition. Both texts were translated into Tibetan at an early date and are found in the Tibetan canon. For an English translation of these texts, see Goswami 2001; *The Lalitavistara Sūtra, the Voice of the Buddha, the Beauty of Compassion* 1983; Aśvaghoṣa 1992.

[141] Strong 2001: 12.

[142] Gyatso 1998: 103.

[143] Strong 2001: 12.

buddha,[144] and since these acts had direct influence on the way in which the life stories of Tibetan masters were written I will enumerate them:

1. Descent from Tuṣita
2. Entry into the womb
3. Birth
4. Exhibition of skill as a youth
5. Delights in his harem
6. Departure
7. Practice of asceticism
8. Going to the heart of enlightenment
9. Defeating māra
10. Becoming a perfect buddha
11. Turning the Wheel of Dharma
12. Final nirvana

That gTsang smyon and his disciples were influenced by the life of the Buddha and used it as a model is apparent in both the form and contents of the texts that they wrote. gTsang smyon composed a verse of praise to Milarepa in the form of the "Twelve Great Acts",[145] and he also reframed Milarepa's life story in terms of the twelve acts, again elevating the subject's status by modeling it on representations of the Buddha's own life.[146] rGod tshang ras pa compared gTsang smyon's birth with the birth of the Buddha in the gardens of Lumbinī as the son of king Śuddhodana,[147] and in his colophon to the *rnam thar* of Ras chung pa he called Ras chung phug "the second Kuśīnagara [because it was] the place where the human emanation of the Victorious One, the great Vajradhara—gTsang smyon Heruka—merged his *rūpakāya* with *dharmadhātu*."[148]

It was not only the historical Buddha that served as a model for the Tibetan hagiographer, however. Descriptions of other exceptional individuals that walked in his footsteps did so as well. Accounts of bodhisattvas and siddhas were particularly important. The bodhisattva became the ideal in the Mahāyāna tradition, and accounts of both the Buddha's own previous lives as a bodhisattva and of some other important bodhisattvas became popular in Tibet. Lha btsun describes how gTsang smyon read the story of the Ever

[144] *mDzad pa bcu gnyis*. There are some variations in this list depending on which sources that are consulted. I have relied on the dictionary by Zhang Yisun et al. 1996: 2334.
[145] G: 73.
[146] Quintman 2006: 216.
[147] G: 14.
[148] rGod tshang ras pa 1973: 672: *rgyal dbang rdo rje 'chang chen mi'i gzugs su sprul pa gtsang smyon he ru ka'i gzugs sku chos dbyings su thim pa'i tshul bstan pa'i sa / rtsa mchog gnyis pa lta bu dpal ras chung phug pa zhes yongs su grags pa'i gnas chen*. rGod tshang ras pa's colophon is translated in its entirety in Clemente 2007: 145. A part of the colophon is translated in Roberts 2007: 40; Sernesi 2007 b: 4; Schaeffer, forthcoming.

Weeping Bodhisattva before he, full of compassion towards beings, left his monastery, for example.[149] The theme of compassion is very important in the *rnam thars*, and gTsang smyon is often portrayed as a compassionate bodhisattva who has no concern for his own well-being but only acts for the sake of benefiting sentient beings.

Besides the bodhisattva, another figure that influenced how gTsang smyon was described was the *siddha (grub thob)*. gTsang smyon was often called *grub thob* and according to the *rnam thars* he dressed and acted like a siddha. Stories of the Indian siddhas were thus another important source of inspiration for the Tibetans who composed *rnam thars*, and several such siddha-biographies were available in Tibetan. One of the most well-known examples is a compilation of eighty-four short siddha-stories claimed to have been created by the Indian master Abhayadatta in the late 11th or early 12th century.[150] The siddhas often appeared mad, acting strangely and provocatively. It is therefore logical that the Tibetans used siddha-stories as a model when writing about the mad yogins. Outrageous actions and strange ways of dressing that can not be justified by using the historical Buddha or the bodhisattvas as a model may be justified with the help of the siddha-stories.

Despite its Indian predecessors, the *rnam thar* literary genre is more characteristic of Tibetan than Indian Buddhism.[151] Janet Gyatso has pointed out that the large number of Tibetan autobiographies and biographies is "striking evidence of the popularity of the charismatic individual in Tibetan society."[152] The Tibetans developed their own ways of systematizing the *rnam thars*, and the most fundamental distinction was between a life account written by someone other than the individual depicted, and a life account written by the individual him or herself. The Tibetan terms for these two categories are *rnam thar* and *rang gi rnam thar* (short: *rang rnam*) which could be translated as "biographies" and "autobiographies" respectively. Both kinds of *rnam thars* are very common, and as Gyatso has pointed out, the categories often overlap. A *rnam thar* written by the subject him or herself—an autobiography (*rang rnam*)—is often actually dictated to a scribe, and thus in reality is written down by somebody else. Also a proper biography (*rnam*

[149] L: 16. The story about *rTag tu ngu* (*Sadāprarudita*) is found in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra in Eight Thousand Verses*. English translation in Conze 1973: 277–300 and it is also rendered in Khenpo Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche 1998: 340–347; Patrul Rinpoche 1994: 153–157. The Ever Weeping Bodhisattva also appears in gTsang smyon's version of Milarepa's life story (Lha lung pa 1979: 59).
[150] **Caturaśītisiddhapravṛtti*, *Grub thob brgyad bcu rtsa bzhi'i lo rgyus*, (*Stories of Eighty-four Siddhas*). There are two English translations of the text (Dowman 1985; Robinson 1979). Schaeffer suggests that this work is not a Tibetan translation of an original Indian text but probably a "truly Indo-Tibetan work, an intercultural creative effort" (Schaeffer 2005: 13–14).
[151] This has also been stated by Robinson 1996: 57.
[152] Gyatso 1998: 102–103.

thar)—even if it is done centuries after the subject lived—often contains passages that originate with the subject.[153]

Besides this two-fold division between self-made *rnam thars* and *rnam thars* made by others, other ways of categorizing *rnam thars* are also applied. Sometimes the texts are divided into "common or general" (*thun mong*) and "uncommon or private" (*thun mong ma yin pa*) *rnam thars*. As the terms somewhat vaguely convey the difference between the "common" and the "uncommon" life stories is as follows: the common category focuses upon the general and visible aspects of the subject's life (such as places visited and persons met), while the uncommon category focuses upon particular and individual mystical events (such as miraculous dreams and visions). A. I. Vostrikov notes that these two categories are also called outer (*phyi*) and secret (*gsang*) respectively, and he also mentions a third, inner (*nang*) category.[154] The inner category of *rnam thars* (*nang gi rnam thar*) contains lists of teachings and empowerments received, and sometimes of retreats that the subject of the *rnam thar* has carried out. The inner life story is closely related to the so-called "records of teachings received" (*thob yig* or *gsan yig*), although the latter is also a separate genre.[155] The different categories are sometimes found within one and the same text. Nevertheless, other times a text belongs exclusively to one category. As noted above, the secret *rnam thar* (*gsang ba'i rnam thar*) focuses on inner yogic experiences, visions and dreams that have been transformative and important for the subject of the text. While this is the common way of explaining these kinds of texts, some Tibetan exegetes add more meaning to it. Chos rgyal rgya mtsho, for instance, points out that a secret *rnam thar* is an "uncensored account of the lama's activity" that should be "kept hidden away from people who are following a pure *Hinayana* discipline or the path of *Mahayana* altruism."[156] Karma Chags med (1613–1678) similarly characterizes a secret *rnam thar* as "that which is difficult for those with small minds and perverted views to conceive."[157] The secret category is thus not written for the general reader, but specifically for the select few who are able to read it without misunderstanding it and without developing wrong views (*log lta*). Tibetan exegetes, such as these, seem to indicate that a secret *rnam thar* could contain descriptions of actual events, meetings with actual people, concrete actions and so forth—just like the outer or general *rnam thar*—but since this information is not intended for the general reader it should not be included in the outer or general *rnam thar*. It should perhaps be mentioned that Chos rgyal rgya mtsho's remark is taken from the preface to a translation of a life story about

[153] Gyatso 1998: 103.
[154] Vostrikov 1970: 186–187.
[155] Vostrikov 1970: 187.
[156] Chos rgyal rgya mtsho 1983: 23.
[157] Translated in Gyatso 1998: 281, n. 11.

the mad yogin 'Brug pa kun legs.[158] This particular *rnam thar* is full of sexual encounters, dirty and abusive language, and various other kinds of outrageous and transgressive behavior that might upset people.[159]

Janet Willis notes that a *rnam thar* is both inspirational and instructional, and in her analysis of the genre she mentions three different levels of a *rnam thar*: the historical, the inspirational and the instructional. These three levels roughly correspond to the outer, inner and secret categories that the Tibetans themselves use.[160]

The various layers or levels of a *rnam thar*—the outer, inner, and secret aspects, and so forth—all convey important aspects of a master's spiritual career, and one and the same text often contains several different elements. Sometimes a *rnam thar* focuses on one particular aspect of the protagonist's life and is therefore classified as, for instance an outer *rnam thar*, but the secret and inner aspects are often included in such texts as well. Janet Gyatso has aptly pointed out that "the proliferation of labels naming increasingly esoteric levels of discourse is often more a matter of rhetoric than genuinely descriptive of content."[161]

The many shades of meaning of the term *rnam thar* make it a bit complicated to translate into English. Since the term is used for a specific kind of Tibetan Buddhist life stories, I have often retained the Tibetan term. However, occasionally, for the sake of variation, I have used other terms such as "life story" and "hagiography".

Songs

Another important ingredient in many—but not all—*rnam thars* is spiritual songs (*mgur*). Already before Buddhism was disseminated on the Tibetan plateau, various religious specialist are known to have used songs to transmit a religious message. Before the famous dharma king Srong btsan sGam po's time, Tibetan historians inform us, Tibet was protected by singers of riddles (*lde'u*), storytellers (*sgrung*) and bon pos.[162] All three traditions still exist in Tibet, though in a different form than in ancient times. What mainly concern us here are the singers of riddles and storytellers. The latter are famous as singers of the epic of king Ge sar of gLing, and the former were a type of specialist that sang question-and-answer songs that dealt with the creation of

[158] Dowman, Keith and Sonam Paljor (trans.) 1983.

[159] Similarly, Stein has pointed out that the oldest Tibetan version of 'Brug pa kun legs *rnam thar* was never widely disseminated. The reason for this is that it was only meant to be read by his closest disciples because others easily could misunderstand it (Stein 1972: 4).

[160] Willis 1995: 5.

[161] Gyatso 1998: 103.

[162] Stein 1988: 191–192.

the world and with human and divine genealogies.[163] Both the storytellers and the singers of riddles influenced the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual songs and also the *rnam thars*.

The most common generic term used for songs—both before and after Buddhism was disseminated in Tibet—is *glu*. *mGur* was originally a subcategory of *glu* but the term eventually came to be used primarily for religious songs with an experiential component.[164] *mGur* is the term used for Milarepa's famous songs, and it is also used for the songs attributed to gTsang smyon. Roger R. Jackson states that it was with Milarepa that the term came to designate a primarily religious genre.[165] Besides the indigenous elements of the Tibetan religious songs, other important elements that were incorporated into them came from the outside. One of the major influences was the tantric songs that had been brought to Tibet by Marpa and other Tibetans who traveled to Nepal and India mainly during the later dissemination period (*phyi dar*) of Buddhism to Tibet, and also by Indian masters who visited Tibet. The siddhas of India used songs to transmit or express their realization to others. Songs are attributed to several of the most famous Indian siddhas such as Saraha, Kṛṣṇācārya/Kāṇha and Tilopa.[166] Three categories of such siddha-songs are often mentioned: *dohā*, *vajrāgīti* (*rdo rje'i glu*) and *caryāgīti* (*spyod pa'i glu*).[167] These songs express the spiritual realizations of the siddha in an often spontaneous and symbolic manner.[168] The Tibetan yogins generally sang their songs in a direct and simple manner. Cyrus Stearns describes how the Tibetan yogin Ko brag pa (1170–1249) used colloquial expressions and a minimum of technical vocabulary in his songs, for example.[169]

The same holds true for the songs of many other Tibetan yogins. The contents of a song depended on the listeners for whom the song was intended. Sometimes the yogins sang for ordinary uneducated people such as farmers, hunters and nomads. On such occasions the songs popularized the Buddhist teachings and communicated them to the common people. At other times the songs were sung among tantric practitioners at tantric feasts (*gaṇacakra*) or as direct instructions to a specific disciple with much prior knowledge and experience of esoteric Buddhism. Songs sang under such circumstances contain profound yogic instructions that are difficult to understand for the unini-

[163] Stein 1988: 195.
[164] Jackson, R. 1996: 372.
[165] Jackson, R. 1996: 372.
[166] For a study of Saraha, see Schaeffer 2005. For an English translation of Kṛṣṇācārya/Kāṇha's life story, see Templeman 1989. For an English translation of Tilopa's life story, see Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros 1995.
[167] I will discuss these tantric songs in a general way without differentiating between the three categories. More details about the tantric siddha songs are found in Ardussi 1977; Guenther 1969; Jackson, R. 1996, Jackson, R. 2004; Kvaerne 1977; Templeman 1994.
[168] Jackson, R. 1996: 373.
[169] Stearns 2000: 14.

tiated. Don grub rgyal lists seven major types of *mgur*, those that: (1) remember the guru's kindness, (2) indicate the source of one's realization, (3) inspire the practice of dharma, (4) give instructions on how to practise, (5) answer disciples' questions, (6) admonish the listeners to uproot evil and (7) serve as missives to gurus or disciples.[170] Although Don grub rgyal's list is very apt, it should be kept in mind that the seven types often overlap and are combined in one and the same song.

As has been noted above, the songs are frequently included in *rnam thar*s, and when songs are included, they constitute an important part of the life story. At other times songs are issued separately and stand more or less on their own. Such song collections are called *mgur 'bum*, literary "hundred thousand songs". Although they resemble the life stories in certain ways, the song collections lack many of the biographical details of the latter. They do, however, generally contain a narrative frame around the songs, and the collections thereby include biographical elements. The narrative frame that surrounds a song is closely connected with, and difficult to separate from, the song. It provides needed background and often explains where, when, why and for whom a song was sung. Parts of the meaning of the song thus derive from its surrounding narrative. The close relationship between the song and its narrative frame resembles the relationship between the pictures and the talk balloons in a cartoon. Without the balloons, the pictures in the cartoons become incomprehensible, and vice versa. In the songs, the master depicted in the story gets the opportunity to communicate (sing) directly to the reader/listener and thereby get his or her message across. Another important aspect of the songs that should be kept in mind is that they are believed to come directly from the master in question, which makes them autobiographical in a way.[171]

Since the songs are supposed to come from a realized and awakened master, the person whose life is depicted in the *rnam thar* has to achieve liberation (*thar pa*) and realization (*rtog pa*) before he or she will have anything to sing about. There must also be some devoted disciples who remember and record their songs. The songs are therefore usually found in the latter part of a *rnam thar*.

Both songs and *rnam thar*s are closely connected with gTsang smyon and the bKa' brgyud tradition. gTsang smyon devoted his life to compiling *rnam thar*s and song collections as did his disciples. Stein notes that the literary creativity of the mad yogins originated in two main sources: "their rapture or 'madman-like' inspiration" and "their knowledge of the traditions, songs and poetry of the people, whose life they like to share."[172]

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170 Don grub rgyal cited in Jackson, R. 1996: 374.

171 We may assume that some songs actually originate with the subject and that others are composed by someone else and ascribed to him or her.

172 Stein 1988: 276.

The Main Sources

Three of gTsang smyon's direct disciples wrote life stories about their lama: rGod tshang ras pa, Lha btsun and dNgos grub dpal 'bar.[173] The *rnam thars* were written in the 16th century, and were subsequently carved into wooden blocks, printed and disseminated. The contents of these texts will be presented in detail in Part Two, but first it might be useful to provide an overview of these texts.

The three *rnam thars* about gTsang smyon are closely related to one another, and the disciples that wrote them probably met, both during and also after, gTsang smyon's lifetime.[174] The fact that the *rnam thars* give a very similar picture of gTsang smyon indicates that the same sources were used by all three authors. Since they all were his direct disciples they also saw and heard things that they could incorporate in their texts.[175] Besides personal accounts they also used accounts written or told by other disciples of gTsang smyon. Both Lha btsun and dNgos grub dpal 'bar mention that they read a text about gTsang smyon's life that was written by Nor bu dpal ldan pa, another one of gTsang smyon's "heart-sons".[176] Another important common source that was regarded as authoritative was gTsang smyon's female companion, Kun tu bzang mo. She was held in high regard by gTsang smyon's disciples and played an important role in promoting the teachings of her "husband".[177] dNgos grub dpal 'bar also mentions that he used notes about the restoration of the Svayambhū Stūpa that were written by rGod tshang ras pa, and since rGod tshang ras pa wrote one of the *rnam thars* they probably have used the same information regarding this important event.[178] dNgos grub dpal 'bar also mentions that he used notes written by Lo paṇ pa when he wrote about gTsang smyon's death.[179] Since the account of gTsang smyon's death is very similar in rGod tshang ras pa's text we may assume that rGod tshang ras pa either relied on Lo paṇ pa's text too, or that he relied

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[173] There are *rnam thars* about both rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun, and both of them also composed many texts. dNgos grub dpal 'bar, on the other hand, is far less known. In Chapter 9 a survey of rGod tshang ras pa's and Lha btsun's life stories and also a brief overview of their works will be given.

[174] Smith mentions that Rab 'byams pa dNgos grub dpal 'bar was one of Lha btsun's many lamas (Smith 2001: 75).

[175] Both dNgos grub dpal 'bar and Lha btsun mention that they inserted things that he had heard directly from gTsang smyon into their *rnam thars*. N: 30b. *dPal ldan bla ma dam pa mkhas grub lha btsun chos gyi rgyal po'i rnam mgur blo 'das chos sku'i rang gdangs*, 1976: 304.

[176] N: 30b; *dPal ldan bla ma dam pa mkhas grub lha btsun chos gyi rgyal po'i rnam mgur blo 'das chos sku'i rang gdangs*, 1976: 169.

[177] dNgos grub dpal 'bar states that he relied upon information that she had told him when he wrote his *rnam thar*. N: 30b.

[178] N: 30b. rGod tshang ras pa includes a catalogue (*dkar chag*) of the renovation in the *Heart of the Sun* (G: 220–226) A text named *Bal yul mchod rten 'phags pa shing kun rnams kyis [sic] dkar chags [sic] mdor bsdug [sic]* is listed in the NGMPP's archives, reel no. E1245/10.

[179] N: 30b

on dNgos grub dpal 'bar's text and thus indirectly on Lo paṇ pa's text. Lha btsun only briefly describes gTsang smyon's death, and he refers those who want to know more about it to texts written by former disciples.[180] The fact that dNgos grub dpal 'bar's *rnam thar* is the earliest, completed only one year after gTsang smyon's death, makes it plausible to assume that the other authors used it as one of their main sources. This is also supported by the many passages that are identical in all three *rnam thars*.

When reading the texts one finds that some details differ, but that the chronology and general contents accord. The different *rnam thars* have their own merits and they complement each other in various ways. rGod tshang ras pa's *rnam thar* is the most extensive, while Lha btsun supplies more dates, for example.

Since the present study focuses on the first thirty years of gTsang smyon's life I have concentrated on the sections that describe this period of his life and compared these parts of the three texts carefully. When summarizing the latter part of gTsang smyon's life I have mainly used dNgos grub dpal 'bar's text and sometimes supplemented it with details from the other *rnam thars*. rGod tshang ras pa devotes nine and a half chapters, in all sixty-three pages, of the *Heart of the Sun* to the first thirty years or so of gTsang smyon's life.[181] Lha btsun describes gTsang smyon's first thirty years in fifty-four pages.[182] Lha btsun's account is interesting since he includes much information that is not mentioned by rGod tshang ras pa or dNgos grub dpal 'bar. dNgos grub dpal 'bar gives a rather brief account and devotes about twenty-five pages to the period.[183]

The Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka

There is also a collection of songs (*mgur 'bum*) attributed to gTsang smyon that belongs to the same edition as the earliest *rnam thar*.[184] The colophon of

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[180] L: 127. Unfortunately Lha btsun does not mention the names of these people but it is probably rGod tshang ras pa and dNgos grub dpal 'bar that he means.

[181] G: 1–63. Since rGod tshang ras pa seldom provides dates and rarely mentions gTsang smyon's age it is hard to be exact.

[182] L: 1–54. On page fifty-four Lha btsun states that gTsang smyon was thirty years old when he went to La phyi and Chu bar.

[183] N: 1b–13a. dNgos grub dpal 'bar does not mention gTsang smyon's age which makes it hard to estimate when he turned thirty and therefore which pages of the *rnam thar* that depicts his first thirty years. dNgos grub dpal 'bar's text has not been published in book format and is therefore paginated in the traditional format with a front and back side of each page, i.e.: 1a and 1b, 2a and 2b, and so forth. Both rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun's texts have been issued as books and the pages are paginated with a new number for the back side of each Tibetan page, i.e.: 1 and 2, 3 and 4, etc.

[184] The name of the song collection is *rJe btsun gtsang pa he ru ka'i mgur 'bum rin po che dbang gi rgyal po thams cad mkhyen pa'i lam ston* (*A Precious Collection of the Songs of the Master Heruka from gTsang that Shows the Path of the All-Knowing One, the Powerful King*).

the collection states that it was compiled (*sbyar*) by rGod tshang ras pa and that gTsang smyon's female companion Kun tu bzang mo was responsible for the arrangement (*bkod*), and for sponsoring the printing (*spar du bzhengs*) of the collection.[185] The songs were originally issued as a separate collection, but both rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun included the songs in their *rnam thars*. rGod tshang ras pa also compiled a short—one and a half folios long—catalogue of gTsang smyon's song collection with the title *Illuminating Sunbeams Catalogue*.[186]

The songs are included in the parts of the *rnam thars* that describe the later period of gTsang smyon's life. They were often sung to a certain disciple or benefactor, sometimes in response to specific questions or situations. The setting in which a song occurs is generally given, and this narrative frame makes it possible to determine that the songs originated in the last twenty-five or so years of gTsang smyon's life. Since the focus of the present study is on gTsang smyon's first thirty years, and the songs were sung in a succeeding period, I will not devote much attention to them. It should, however, be remembered that it is possible that gTsang smyon also sang songs during the first thirty years of his life. On a few occasions such songs are referred to in the *rnam thars*.[187] But, before his thirties gTsang smyon had not yet obtained the fame and support of later days, and without followers, disciples and benefactors any songs he may have sung were probably never remembered or written down.[188]

Well aware of the difficulties of determining the authorship of the songs, I find it quite reasonable to assume that they originated from gTsang smyon. Subsequently those who wrote them down perhaps modified them. gTsang smyon was, after all, a very learned person with great literary skill and he was also well versed in the art of composing songs. His own works are distinct proof of this, and he also had many followers who could remember and record his possible songs.

The Brief Life Stories

Besides the songs and the three extensive *rnam thars* that his direct disciples wrote, a few short life stories of gTsang smyon are available. I have found two short summaries of *Heart of the Sun* and there are probably more texts of this kind to be found. The most interesting example is a short *rnam thar*

[185] gTsang smyon: 27b. Ehrhard has also studied this colophon, Ehrhard, forthcoming c.
[186] *dKar chags nyi 'od snang ba*. This catalogue is included at the end of gTsang smyon's short text *mGur kyi dkar chags ma rig mun sel dad pa'i mig 'byed*. I will return to the latter when I describe gTsang smyon's own works in Chapter 9.
[187] Lha btsun also includes a couple of songs directly before mentioning that gTsang smyon was thirty. This indicates that some of the songs were sung in his late twenties, perhaps when he was twenty-nine (L: 50, 51, 53–54).
[188] It is mentioned in the *Heart of the Sun* that gTsang smyon sang songs that were not written down already in his early twenties (G: 40).

written by the dGe lugs pa scholar Thu'u bkwan bLo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (Thu'u bkwan, 1737–1802).[189]

Thu'u bkwan included this short *rnam thar* of gTsang smyon at the beginning of a *rnam thar* he wrote about his famous lama; lCang skya Ye shes bstan pa'i sgron ma, alias Rol pa'i rdo rje (1717–1786). gTsang smyon's *rnam thar* is included in a section that describes lCang skya's previous lives.[190] The reason for this is that lCang skya stated that he was an incarnation of gTsang smyon.[191] Thu'u bkwan's *rnam thar* of gTsang smyon is helpful since he, unlike rGod tshang ras pa, writes in a Tibetan that adheres to both grammatical and spelling rules. Therefore, some problematic passages of rGod tshang ras pa's text are more easily understood when Thu'u bkwan's text is consulted. It is also interesting to see how Thu'u bkwan summarizes rGod tshang ras pa's extensive text. What he chose to mention and what he chose to omit tells something about how he read the *Heart of the Sun* and what he considered to be the most important events in gTsang smyon's life. The fact that he himself is a well-known dGe lugs pa scholar and the fact that his famous lama Rol pa'i rdo rje was considered an incarnation of gTsang smyon also shows that gTsang smyon was accepted, not only by some marginalized and eccentric bKa' brgyud yogins in the 16th century, but also by the members of the dGe lugs pa elite several centuries later.[192]

The Lion of Faith

dNgos grub dpal 'bar wrote a life story called: *The Common Life Story of the Venerable One of gTsang—The Great Heruka: The Lion of Faith Playing on the Snowy Mountain of Good Qualities.*[193] The title indicates that this *rnam thar* is a general or common *rnam thar* (*thun mong gi rnam thar*) but, as already mentioned, this kind of categorization is rather arbitrary. Despite its name, in addition to the expected biographical information it deals with visions, dreams and other things that are usually associated with the so-called uncommon or secret life stories.

[189] I refer to it in the footnotes with the letter "T", and it is listed in the Bibliography under Thu'u bkwan bLo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989.
[190] T: 39–45.
[191] T: 39. For an English translation of this passage, see Illich 2006: 358–359. Illich does not translate the short life story itself.
[192] Another short *rnam thar* that also summarizes *Heart of the Sun* is found in the *Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism* (Khetsun Sangpo 1981, vol. 8: 366–368). The fact that both Thu'u bkwan and Khetsun Sangpo have used rGod tshang ras pa's text indicates that this text was more widely available than the other two *rnam thars*, at least in more recent years.
[193] *rJe btsun gtsang pa he ru ka'i thun mong gi rnam thar yon tan gyi gangs ri la dad pa'i seng ge rnam par rtse ba.* As mentioned, I refer to this book as *Lion of Faith*, an abbreviated form of the title.

The book was printed in 1508 at the monastery bSam gtan gling in La stod rGyal, near sKyid grong, not far from the Nepalese border.[194] The *rnam thar* is 31 folios long and was printed in gNas chen dgon gsar in rTsib ri.[195] This life story is very rare, and so far no detailed studies of it have appeared.[196] The text is, as far as I know, only available as a microfilm in the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP) and in Gene Smith's private collection.[197] The text is not only important because of its rarity but also because it is the oldest *rnam thar* in existence. As said above, it was probably used as a major source by both rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun.[198] dNgos grub dpal 'bar's text is therefore a natural starting point for studying gTsang smyon's life. At the beginning of the text dNgos grub dpal 'bar explains why and how the life story came about.

> As for how this life story [came about]: When I was on the outskirts of Zal mo brag in dBus, and the Great Venerable One [gTsang smyon] was cutting through [our] conjectures about the oral instructions of the profound meaning, the heart-sons, the close disciples, exhorted me by saying: "You must compose a life story of the Lord."[199] Based upon [this urge], I offered [my] corrections in front of the Great Venerable One so that he could give me permission (*dgongs grol*) and clarify my doubts.
>
> Most of the root-verses [of the *rnam thar*] were completed in the first fifteen-day period[200] of the first month[201] in the Female Fire-Rabbit year (1507).
>
> Then again, later on, the close disciples came and insistently ordered that [I] must compose an explanation [to the root-verses]. Based on that I compiled the main part of the life story from what I heard from the master himself, some originating from reliable sources and other things from reasonable argument.[202]

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194 N: 30b. bSam gtan gling is described briefly in Gyurme Dorje 2004: 328.

195 N: 30b; Smith 2001: 74.

196 Some scholars have made brief references to it (Smith 2001: 74; Quintman 2006: 191–192, n. 8; Schaeffer, forthcoming).

197 NGMPP reel no. L834/2. Smith mentions that he has the text in his collection (Smith 2001: 288, n. 180) but it has not yet been made available on the TBRC. It is a photocopy of Smith's text that I have used when studying the text.

198 Quintman is of the opinion that it clearly served as a major source for both rGod tshang ras pa's and Lha btsun's works (Quintman 2006: 191, n. 8).

199 This stay in Zal mo brag is described on p. 24b. It is interesting to note that dNgos grub dpal 'bar also received profound instructions in Zal mo brag on an earlier occasion according to the life story (p. 9a). On that occasion gTsang smyon told his secret life story (p. 9a). See also rGod tshang ras pa who mentions that dNgos grub dpal 'bar was with gTsang smyon and others in Zal mo brag at the end of gTsang smyon's life (G: 256).

200 Literally, "white direction", Tibetan *dkar phyogs*. This refers to the first fifteen days of the month up to the full moon day on the 15th. The last fifteen days of the month are called *dmar phyogs*.

201 Literally "the display of miracles", *cho 'phrul chen po*. This refers to the first part of the first Tibetan month. During this time it is believed that the Buddha performed different miracles each day.

202 N: 2b: *de lta bu'i rnam par thar pa 'di yang / yul dbus kyi sa'i cha zal mo brag gi mtha' rtsar / rje btsun chen po'i drung du bdag zab don gyi man ngag la sgro 'dogs gcod pa'i dus su / thugs sras bu chen nams kyis / rje nyid kyi rnam par thar pa cig khyod kyis brtsom*

The *rnam thar* starts with the root-verses (*rtsa tshig*, 1b–2b) and these verses are also found scattered throughout the text at the appropriate places.[203]

The root-verses consist of ten offerings of homage (*'dud pa*, 1b–2a) and five invocations (2a–2b). Each of the, in all, fifteen verses have four lines, and each line has nine syllables. As dNgos grub dpal 'bar explains above, the text itself is an explanation or commentary on the root-verses, and the root-verses thus form the skeleton of the text. At the end of the text, before the colophon, dNgos grub dpal 'bar repeats the five invocations that are also found at the beginning of the text. The root verses, as we have seen above, were composed a year before their explanations, when gTsang smyon was still alive. Then he completed the *rnam thar*—a synopsis of the verses with their explanations—in 1508, when gTsang smyon had passed away.

After having explained how and why the *rnam thar* was composed, the general outline (*sa bcad*) of the text is given.[204]

The *rnam thar* consists of three main sections each of which has several subheadings. The introductory section (*'jug pa'i yan lag*, 2b–3a) is divided into an explanation of the name of the text (*mtshan smos pa*, 2b), and an expression of worship (*mchod par brjod pa*, 2b–3a). The expression of worship is subdivided into a general and a specific expression of worship.

The main part of the text is the second major section that the author calls "the actual life story" (*rnam par thar pa dngos*, 3a–30a). This part is divided into two subsections: "the synopsis in sections" (*lus mdor bstan pa*, 3a) and "the extensive explanation in branches" (*yan lag rgyas par bshad pa*, 3a–30a). It is in the second part that the actual life story is found.

The second part is divided into two sections with several subsections. The two sections are: "How he took birth as an emanation in a distinguished family as had been prophesied, and became ordained" (3a–5b), and: "How he embodied the three deeds and caused the teaching to flourish" (5b–30a).[205]

As the titles of the sections make clear, the first describes prophecies, dreams and signs in connection with gTsang smyon's entering of the womb and the pregnancy of his mother. Then, dNgos grub dpal 'bar explains why it is suitable to associate these prophecies and dreams with gTsang smyon.

(rtsom) dgos zhes bskul ba la brten / rje btsun chen po'i drung du dgongs grol dang / dogs gcod gyi zhus dag phul / me mo yos kyi lo cho 'phrul chen po'i dkar phyogs la / rtsa tshig phal mo che grub bar byas yong ba / phyis su'ang thugs sras bu slob rnams kyis / 'grel pa brtsom (rtsom) dgos pa'i bka' lung nan gyis phebs pa la rten / rnam par thar pa phal che ba rnams ni / rje btsun nyid la dngos su thos pa dang / 'ga' zhig ni yid ches pa las rgyud de thos pa dang / gzhan dag ni rgyu mtshan dang bcas pa'i gtan tshigs las nges pa rnyed pa rnams / phyogs gcig tu bri bar bya'o /.

[203] I have included the root-verses as an appendix, both in translation and in Tibetan (Appendix 2).

[204] For a general outline of the text, see Appendix 3.

[205] N: 3a. 1: *lung bstan dang bcas te rigs khyad par can du sprul pa'i skye ba bzhes nas rab tu byung tshul*, 2: *mdzad pa gsum gyi lus ngos bzung ste bstan pa sprul tshul.*

Following this, gTsang smyon's birth and childhood are described, and the section concludes with an account of his ordination.

The second section: "How he embodied the three deeds and caused the teaching to flourish" constitutes the major part of the *rnam thar* (5b–30a) and the first of the three deeds describes "how he planted the victory banner of accomplishment." This deed concerns how gTsang smyon practised and attained accomplishment (5b–9b). The second deed is "how he made connections by means of conduct", and this describes how he spread the teachings and helped beings (9b–17b). The third and final deed is divided into two parts. The first part describes how he renovated the Svayambhū Stūpa (17b–23a), and the second part how he passed away in order to help those who cling to permanence (23a–30a).

The *rnam thar* ends with the third major section (30a) that, despite its name, actually consists of a repetition of the invocations that are also found at the beginning of the *rnam thar*. Finally, various colophons follow (30b–31a).

Before continuing with the next two main sources, a few words about the author of *Lion of Faith* will be given. The text's author, dNgos grub dpal 'bar (born about 1460?), is an unknown figure, and no *rnam thar* of him has been traced.[206] I also do not know of any other work written by him.[207] His name is, however, mentioned in some of the texts that belong to the "school of gTsang smyon",[208] and he seems to have been one of gTsang smyon's main disciples.[209] dNgos grub dpal 'bar probably met gTsang smyon rather early in gTsang smyon's life and he figures as one of gTsang smyon's early students. All three *rnam thar*s contain sections describing how dNgos grub dpal 'bar received instructions from gTsang smyon in rDzong dkar chos de in 'Bras yul when gTsang smyon was on his way to La phyi.[210] Lha btsun states that this meeting occurred when gTsang smyon was thirty-eight, and if this is correct the meeting occurred in 1489.[211]

Both rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun mention that dNgos grub dpal 'bar was a very learned scholar who had obtained the *rab 'byams pa* title.[212] This

[206] Smith 2001: 288, n. 179.
[207] Schaeffer does not include any other work by or about dNgos grub dpal 'bar among the fifty-five extant prints of gTsang smyon and his disciples that he has traced (Schaeffer, forthcoming). It is however possible that he wrote other texts, and perhaps more texts written by dNos grub dpal 'bar will be found someday.
[208] For information about "the school of gTsang smyon", see Chapter 9.
[209] Sangs rgyas dar po dpal bzang counts him among the most exalted great sons (*khyad par du 'phags pa'i bu chen*) (Sangs rgyas dar po dpal bzang 1568: 79b). rGod tshang ras pa pays homage to him and the other main disciples G: 262.
[210] G: 133; L: 93; N: 15b–16a.
[211] L: 93. A meeting between Lha btsun and gTsang smyon that occurred when Lha btsun was sixteen is described in Lha btsun's *rnam mgur*. This would mean that their meeting occurred around 1489 so maybe Lha btsun was present when dNgos grub dpal 'bar met gTsang smyon (*The Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 182).
[212] G: 133; L: 93.

title was granted to great scholars who had studied extensively, and gTsang smyon's root lama Sha ra ba also held the title. Georges Dreyfus points out that the *rab 'byams* title was awarded after a scholar had studied the relevant texts, often with several teachers in various centers, and he also mentions that Sangs rgyas dpal, a student of Ngor chen dkun dga' bzang po (1382–1477) is said to have been the first to obtain the title.[213] The title thus informs us that dNgos grub dpal 'bar was a learned man, and this is further emphasized by Sangs rgyas dar po dpal bzang who uses the title *paṇ chen* before dNgos grub dpal 'bar's name in his history of the bKa' brgyud tradition.[214] So does Bya bral pa Tshul khrims dpal ldan in his *rnam thar* of bSod rnams blo gros.[215] *Paṇ chen* is a Tibetanized form of the Sanskrit *mahāpaṇḍita*, which is a title used in India for the most learned scholars. Since many years of studies must have been needed to obtain such a title of learning, dNgos grub dpal 'bar ought to have been at least in his mid twenties when he met gTsang smyon. Smith is inclined to place his birth in the period between 1462 and 1472, and if he indeed was a learned *rab 'byams* when he met gTsang smyon, as the sources state, I would suggest that the earlier date is more probable.[216]

As mentioned, Lha btsun states that dNgos grub dpal 'bar was among many *dge bshes* who had assembled for teachings in rDzong dkar chos sde. He continues to describe that gTsang smyon granted the scholars "pointing out instructions" based on the Four Letter Mahāmudrā, and after that gave dNgos grub dpal 'bar profound instructions in private. Having practised according to the profound instructions, dNgos grub dpal 'bar obtained extraordinary results, Lha btsun informs us.[217] dNgos grub dpal 'bar himself mentions that he received many instructions from gTsang smyon, and he also describes how gTsang smyon was able to demonstrate his own profound realization of dharmakāya both to him and to his other disciples.[218] In the colophon to the *Lion of Faith*, dNgos grub dpal 'bar, with traditional modesty, presents himself as a Buddhist monk (*shakya'i dge slong*).[219] rGod tshang ras pa is less moderate and salutes him as "the best monk, the king of learned ones."[220]

That dNgos grub dpal 'bar indeed was a learned person is evident when one reads the *rnam thar*. The spelling and grammar are flawless and he structures the text strictly according to formal rules. The many variant spellings and obscure words that makes rGod tshang ras pa's *rnam thar* difficult

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213 Dreyfus 2003: 144.
214 Sangs rgyas dar po dpal bzang 1568: 79b.
215 Bya bral pa Tshul khrims dpal ldan 1544: 6a.
216 Smith 2001: 288, n. 179. It is of course possible that dNgos grub dpal 'bar obtained his titles of learning after he met gTsang smyon.
217 L: 93.
218 N: 16a.
219 N: 30b.
220 G: 262; *mkhas pa'i dbang po btsun pa'i mchog.*

to read are nowhere to be seen in dNgos grub dpal 'bar's text. As seen above, the introductory section of the text states that he was asked to compose the *rnam thar* by gTsang smyon's close disciples, and he was probably asked to do so because he was a great scholar and therefore suitable for the task.

The Heart of the Sun

rGod thang ras pa[221] wrote a *rnam thar* titled: *The Heart of the Sun, which Clarifies Vajrayāna: The Life Story of gTsang smyon Heruka, Completely Victorious in Every Direction.*[222] Although we are not informed what *rnam thar* category this text belongs to, the title reveals that it is a life story that clarifies Vajrayāna, and since Vajrayāna is the "Secret Mantra: Vajra Vehicle" (*gsang sngags rdo rje'i theg pa*), the title, somewhat vaguely, suggests that the life story belongs to the secret category (*gsang ba'i rnam thar*). If one compares rGod tshang ras pa's *rnam thar* with the other two texts, the main difference does not concern secrecy or visionary accounts, however. Instead what distinguishes it from them is that it is the most comprehensive version. In the 146 folios rGod tshang ras pa appears to have included all the various sources that he had at his disposal, and thereby providing a more detailed account of gTsang smyon's life than both dNgos grub dpal 'bar and Lha btsun did. Besides including the songs found in gTsang smyon's song collection, he also included most of the information found in dNgos grub dpal 'bar's text, and to this he adds some letters, lists, a travel document and many stories and details that are lacking in the more abbreviated descriptions of gTsang smyon's life. It has been noted that rGod tshang ras pa's text is historically the most interesting, and many names of places and persons and other significant details that are absent in the other *rnam thars* are noted in the text.[223]

Of the three *rnam thars* about gTsang smyon this particular text is the most well-known and referred to. One of the reasons for this is that the text was published in 1969 with a preface by E. Gene Smith.[224] In his preface Smith summarized the contents of the book's fifteen chapters and thereby made its contents available to English readers. English studies on gTsang

[221] An overview of rGod tshang ras pa's life and works will be given in Chapter 9.

[222] *gTsang smyon he ru ka phyogs thams cad las rnam par rgyal ba'i rnam thar rdo rje theg pa'i gsal byed nyi ma'i snying po.* I will sometimes refer to this book as the *Heart of the Sun*, an abbreviated form of the title.

[223] Smith 2001: 67.

[224] *The Life of the Saint of gTsang.* New Delhi: Śata-piṭaka Series, vol. 69. Ed. Lokesh Chandra. Smith notes that the original xylograph that is reproduced in this book belongs to Tokden Rinpoche of Ladakh (Smith 2001: 285, n. 144). Smith also mentions that he knows of the existence of two other copies of the text, one is preserved in the library of Burmiok Athing in Gangtok, Sikkim, and one in the Toyo Bunko in Tokyo (Smith 2001: 285, n. 144).

smyon, however, are not what concerns us here since that topic was addressed above, but the Tibetan text itself.

According to the colophon the text was completed on the fifteenth day of a Monkey year.[225] Unfortunately it does not specify which Monkey year, so it could refer to 1512, 1524 or 1536.[226] Roberts mentions that the life story that Lha btsun wrote in 1543 directs those interested in knowing more about what happened when gTsang smyon passed away to more comprehensive accounts written by Lha btsun's great former dharma brothers.[227] According to Roberts, the texts referred to are probably the *rnam thar*s by dNgos grub dpal 'bar and rGod tshang ras pa.[228] If this is the case, rGod tshang ras pa must have written his life story before 1543 when Lha btsun wrote his version of the life story. Ehrhard suggests that rGod tshang ras pa composed the text in 1512 while he was staying in Tsāri.[229]

Due to its many peculiar spelling variations and disdain for the conventions of literary Tibetan, the *Heart of the Sun* is rather difficult to read. Smith once pointed out that "the orthographical substitutions found in the text are numerous enough to be the subject of a special study in itself."[230] As will be seen in the footnotes and Appendix 1, where sections of the Tibetan text is presented, rGod tshang ras pa often uses prefixes, suffixes, subscripts and superscripts that are not found in dictionaries.[231] He also often excludes prefixes, suffixes, subscripts and superscripts. It is generally rather easy to ascertain what word rGod tshang ras pa must have had in mind, both from the contents of the story, and also by consulting dictionaries and looking at words with similar spelling. For example, he writes *skyed rims* instead of *bskyed rim*, *nga brgyal* instead of *nga rgyal*, *srid zhu* instead of *sri zhu* and *sleng ba* instead of *gleng ba*. After a while one becomes familiar with rGod tshang ras pa's non-standard spellings and unusual grammar, and it becomes easier to comprehend the *rnam thar*.

As is common in many *rnam thar*s, the prose style is highly colloquial and unadorned,[232] but rGod tshang ras pa does insert sections of more poetic language that approximates classical literary Tibetan. In the poetic passages that occur, "the poetical aesthetics is based on parallel structure and metric pattern found in folk and epic literature" and not on the classical śloka.[233]

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[225] G: 284.
[226] This has been discussed in Roberts 2007: 42.
[227] Roberts 2007: 41; L: 127.
[228] Roberts 2007: 41.
[229] Ehrhard, forthcoming c.
[230] Smith 2001: 67.
[231] In the Tibetan texts I have included parentheses that show the words spelled as I have understood them. This will clarify how I have read the text and perhaps make it easier for others who would like to study rGod tshang ras pa's text.
[232] According to Kurtis Schaeffer this might be a sectarian issue, he mentioned, for example, that the *rnam thar* of Tsong Khapa by mKhas grub is written in a higly refined language (Schaeffer personal communication, Nov. 2008).
[233] Smith 2001: 69.

The *rnam thar* is divided into fifteen chapters (*le'u*) each of which is subdivided in sections or topics (*skor*) of varying length. The contents of each chapter and their in all forty-three sections have been accurately summarized by Smith and will therefore not be repeated here.[234] It is the first eight chapters of the text that deal with the period of his life that this dissertation focuses upon. Chapters six, seven and eight describe how gTsang smyon became a mad yogin and his subsequent activities as a mad yogin. Many citations from, and references to, these three chapters are included in the dissertation, and I have therefore chosen to present these three chapters in their entirety in Appendix 1.

rGod tshang ras pa, just like the other authors, follows a chronological order that is quite straightforward when he describes the life of gTsang smyon. He provides us with few dates, but he does mention the passage of seasons and sometimes gives information about how many years and/or months gTsang smyon stayed at various places.[235] Smith writes that although no attempt to establish even the simplest chronological outline of gTsang smyon's life has been made it would be possible to make such a compilation if the three *rnam thar*s and the *mgur 'bum* were compared with one another and also with *rnam thar*s of gTsang smyon's contemporaries.[236]

The Life Story which Causes the Body-Hairs of the Faithful to Flutter

Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal[237] wrote a life story called *The Life Story of the Siddha, the Madman from gTsang, which Causes the Body-Hairs of the Faithful to Flutter*.[238] The text is 65 folios long and was printed for the first time in Brag dkar rta so in 1543.[239]

According to the *Life and Songs of Lha btsun*,[240] the life story was begun when Lha btsun and other disciples stayed with gTsang smyon in the Chu bar area. After having received instructions the disciples went to various places to practice; Lha btsun went to Brag dmar 'chong lung and was told to return after ten days. Lha btsun seem to have forgotten the days, and after

[234] Smith's summary is very useful when studying rGod tshang ras pa's text (Smith 2001: 63–67).

[235] rGod tshang ras pa provides us with the date of birth (1452), the year when he made a one year meditation retreat in Chu bar (1495) and the date for the renovation of the Svayambhū Stūpa (1504). He erroneously provides the year 1543 as the year when gTsang smyon passed away (It should be 1507). I will return to this when describing gTsang smyon's death in Chapter 7.

[236] Smith 2001: 63. For a tentative chronological outline of gTsang smyon life, see Appendix 4.

[237] An overview of Lha btsun's life and works will be given in Chapter 9.

[238] *Grub thob gtsang pa smyon pa'i rnam thar dad pa'i spu slong g.yo ba.*

[239] L: 128.

[240] In the Bibliography this text is found under its full title: *dPal ldan bla ma dam pa mkhas grub lha btsun chos gyi rgyal po'i rnam mgur blo 'das chos sku'i rang gdangs* 1976.

fifteen days he received a letter from gTsang smyon in which it was written that he should return.[241] Having returned to gTsang smyon, Lha btsun was instructed how to draw maṇḍalas. At that time he happened to see a draft of a *rnam thar* written by another close disciple, and when looking at it, he felt strong devotion towards his lama. After this, gTsang smyon told Lha btsun about his experience of liberation in sTag tshang. Lha btsun became very happy and limitless devotion arose. He then, full of tears, offered many prostrations and asked gTsang smyon to continue his liberation story. gTsang smyon agreed to do so, but told Lha btsun not to reveal his story in front of many people. Lha btsun wrote down gTsang smyon's story in verses. In this way Lha btsun gradually wrote down a draft to a *rnam thar* in verses based upon what gTsang smyon dictated to him.[242]

The Life Story which Causes the Body-Hairs of the Faithful to Flutter has been published at the beginning of *bDe mchog mkha' 'gro snyan rgyud (Ras chung snyan rgyud): Two manuscript collections of texts from the yig cha of gTsang smyon He ru ka.*[243] The *rnam thar* that is reproduced in this particular collection does not come from the original Brag dkar rta so edition, however, but from another print. Xylograph copies of the original Brag dkar rta so print were brought to the West by Giuseppe Tucci and are available in the Tucci Tibetan fund in the Library of IsIAO.[244] Thanks to the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project, a microfilm made from the Brag dkar rta so edition is also available.[245] Despite different design and block drawings, the two editions seem to be paginated in the same way.[246]

Like rGod tshang ras pa, Lha btsun has included the songs in the *rnam thar*.[247] Despite these similarities, the structure of Lha btsun's *rnam thar* is more similar to dNgos grub dpal 'bar's text than rGod tshang ras pa's. It has no chapters or sections, like the *Heart of the Sun*, but organizes the narrative around verses like the *Lion of Faith*. The forty-one verses are four lines in length, each line containing nine syllables. Like the verses in the *Lion of Faith*, they end with the verb *'dud* ("bow down", "pay homage"). As seen above, it appears that Lha btsun first wrote the verses and later added the narrative parts and inserted the songs at the appropriate places in the *rnam thar*. Each verse pays homage to a particular period of gTsang smyon's life,

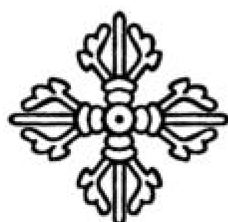
[241] *dPal ldan bla ma dam pa mkhas grub lha btsun chos gyi rgyal po'i rnam mgur blo 'das chos sku'i rang gdangs* 1976: 303.
[242] *dPal ldan bla ma dam pa mkhas grub lha btsun chos gyi rgyal po'i rnam mgur blo 'das chos sku'i rang gdangs* 1976: 304.
[243] Lha btsun 1971. It is this edition of the text that I have used.
[244] De Rossi Filibeck 1993, vol. 2: 341. Clemente remarks that Tucci made marks in the texts that he studied, and we therefore know that he studied this text, Clemente 2007: 124.
[245] NGMPP reel no. E2518/10.
[246] Although I have not been able to compare each single page of the two prints, the pages that I have compared begin and end with the same word, and both texts are 65 folios long.
[247] The first song is presented on page 50 of the text. As mentioned above I stick to the western-style pagination of the text, i.e.: 50 instead of 25b.

and the verses are arranged in chronological order. After each verse Lha btsun describes this period of his master's life, and he inserts the songs that he sang at the period being described.[248]

With some minor variations, Lha btsun follows a similar chronology to the other two authors. Lha btsun's *rnam thar* differs insofar that he frequently mentions gTsang smyon's age. dNgos grub dpal 'bar and rGod tshang ras pa only give information about gTsang smyon's age when they describe his childhood and youth and on a few occasions some dates.

[248] I have followed in Lha btsun and dNgos grub dpal 'bar's footsteps in the third part where I describe gTsang smyon's life, and cite verses which summarize a particular period of gTsang smyon's life before that period of his life is described in detail.

Part Two: gTsang smyon Heruka



MAP OF PLACES AND DISTRICTS WHICH WERE OF IMPORTANCE TO GTSANG SMYON HERUKA



Chapter 3: Birth and Childhood

> I respectfully pay homage to the assemblage of lamas, deities and ḍākinīs.
>
> I bow down at the feet of the glorious lama, the Heruka!
> You are the unification of all the buddhas, the sixth Vajradhara.
> The deeds of the Victorious Ones are endless and inconceivable.
> You clear away the disturbances of samsara and nirvana by merely having your name heard.
>
> I bow down to you, Protector!
> Just as prophesied by the Victorious Ones,
> You took birth as an emanation in these snowy mountains.
> Through virtuous actions from beginning to end,
> You spread the essential doctrine in the ten directions.[249]

Prophecies

gTsang smyon Heruka's disciples begin their accounts of their lama's life story by quoting various Buddhist scriptures where the coming of the Lord (*rje*)[250] is foretold. According to their way of seeing, there are prophecies (*lung bstan*) about gTsang smyon in important Buddhist texts such as the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*[251] and the *Heap of Jewels Sūtra*.[252]

> How wonderful! This was said by the bhagavan (Buddha Śākyamuni) in the *The Heap of Jewels Sūtra*:[253] "Ananda in the future, in the body of a vajra master, I will teach the Dharma." So [it was said], and in the *Tantra which Completely Grasps the Qualities of the Lama*[254] it is said: "Displaying a body in accordance with the desire [of beings], I will teach the holy Dharma [and], in the times of the last five hundred years, [I will teach] in the form of a child." And in the the *Vajra Tent of the Ḍākinī's Tantra*[255] it is said: "There-

[249] N: 1b. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 2.
[250] rGod tshang ras pa often calls gTsang smyon *rJe* (Lord).
[251] *Sher phyin mdo, Prajñāpāramitāsūtra.*
[252] *dKon mchog brtsegs pa mdo, Ratnakūṭasūtra.*
[253] *mDo dkon mchog brtsegs pa.*
[254] *bLa ma'i yon tan yongs bzung gi rgyud.*
[255] *mKha' 'gro ma rdo rje gur gyi rgyud.*

fore a vajra holder will take the form of a master and then after focusing on the benefit of the beings he will dwell in the body of a low person."[256]

All three disciples agree that gTsang smyon was predicted in the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras, and it is also often stated that he had a special connection with the teachings contained in those sūtras. This is not surprising; several great masters of Tibetan Buddhism are described as having a special relation to the Perfection of Wisdom. These teachings form the core teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism and have always been regarded as very important in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

Lha btsun quotes a section of the *Immaculate Goddess Sūtra* where it is written that:[257]

> There are prophecies of the revered lama, the Heruka, in many deep Prajñāpāramitāsūtras. Especially in the *Immaculate Goddess Sūtra* it is said: "Prajñāpāramitā will spread from the north to the north by myself, and furthermore in the land of the red faced ones [a person] with the name 'Madman' will spread Prajñāpāramitā, and he will specifically not do so by means of discipline."[258]

dNgos grub dpal 'bar, quoted the same text, but the last line that says that a person with the name "Madman" will spread the teaching is not mentioned.[259] Without the last line it becomes much more difficult to connect this sūtra with gTsang smyon. dNgos grub dpal 'bar seems aware of this and explains that:

> The reason for letting these prophecies of the Perfection of Wisdom turn into prophecies about the Venerable One is that he is one who passed his time bringing his own as well as others' continuums to maturation and liberation by means of the view, meditation, conduct, and results which are explained in the profound Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras.[260]

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[256] G: 6: *e ma ho / 'di skad du / bcom ldan 'das kyis mdo dkon mchog brtsegs par / kun dga'o [kun dga' bo] nga nyid ma 'ongs pa'i dus na rdo rje slob dpon gyi gzugs kyi chos ston par 'gyur ro / / ces pa dang / bla ma'i yon tan yongs bzung gi rgyud las / / ji ltar mos pa'i gzugs su ston / / nga nyid lnga brgya tha ma'i tshe / / byis pa'i gzugs kyi dam chos ston / / ces dang / mkha' 'gro ma rdo rje gur gyi rgyud las / / gang phyir rdo rje 'dzin pa ni / / de nyid slob dpon gzugs bzung ste / / sems can phan rtogs dmigs nas ni / / tha mal pa'i gzugs su gnas / /.*

[257] A text with a similar title—*Lha mo dri med 'od kyis zhus pa, Vimalaprabhaparipṛcchā*—is contained in the *bKa' 'gyur*, vol. *pa* in the *mdo* section, vol. 59.

[258] L: 4: *rje btsun bla ma he ru ka 'di nyid shes phyin zab mo'i mdo las mang du lung stan ni zhing / khyad par lha mo dri med ma'i mdo las / shes rab kyi pha rol du phyin pa byang phyogs nas byang phyogs su nga nyid kyis rgyas par byed cing / de yang gdong dmar can gyi yul du smyon pa'i ming can gyis shes rab kyi pha rol du phyin pa rgyas par 'gyur te / 'dul ba snying por byed pa ni ma yin no zhes gsungs pas /.*

[259] N: 3a.

[260] N: 3b: *sher phyin gyi lung stan de / rje btsun 'di nyid kyi lung stan du 'gro ba'i rgyu mtshan ni / rje 'di nyid sher phyin zab mo'i mdo nas bshad pa'i lta bsgom spyod 'bras kyis / rang rgyud smin cing / gzhan rgyud smin grol la 'god pa'i dus 'da' ba cig 'dug pas /.*

gTsang smyon thus proved to be the very person indicated in the sacred scripture through his activities. dNgos grub dpal 'bar mentions that he asked gTsang smyon whether it was appropriate to regard him as the very individual mentioned in the prophecies. Not only did gTsang smyon reply that this was indeed appropriate, he also quoted some sections of the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra where it is said that the Prajñāpāramitā teachings would be diffused not by a monk but by a yogin, and that the main subject of those teachings will not be discipline.[261]

According to the *Heart of the Sun*, also the Great Master from Uḍḍiyāna (Padmasambhava) whom Tibetan Buddhists consider to have been instrumental in bringing Buddhism to Tibet, had foretold gTsang smyon's appearance. rGod tshang ras pa mentions that the treasure finder (*gter ston*) Byang chub gling pa[262] revealed a treasure text (*gter ma*) entitled *rDzogs chen ba ku la byang phra mo* from the back of the great rNam snang[263] in bSam yas, and he quotes from the treasure text in the *Heart of the Sun*:

> In the future, when the life span of beings will be fifty years, my—Padma's—emanation-body will be born in the *sMyang*-family, in a Monkey year, and [due to] "disciplined conduct" he will be called madman. [By merely] seeing, hearing, thinking, or touching him, enlightenment will be attained.[264]

The *gter ma* texts often contain prophecies, and it is interesting that rGod tshang ras pa uses this kind of text to further sanctify his teacher. By doing so, he connects gTsang smyon with Padmasambhava, and gTsang smyon is even considered an emanation of him.[265]

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261 *'dul ba, vinaya*. N: 4a.

262 TBRC gives information about several Byang chub gling pas. One of those, Śākya ye shes, whose primary title was Śākya ye shes Byang chub gling pa, lived in the 14th century and was a teacher of Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340–1396). I have not been able to determine if this might be the master referred to in the prophecy.

263 Short for rNam par snang mdzad, which is Tibetan for Vairocana. Vairocana is the chief buddha of the Tathāgatha or Buddha family (*bde bzhin gshegs pa'i rigs, tathāgathakula*), which is one of the five Buddha families (*rigs lnga, pañcakula*), but it is also the name of a historical master who was important during the first period of dissemination of Buddhism to Tibet. Since this seems to be a description about how a treasure (*gter ma*) is found, this probably means that the *gter ston* revealed a text from the back of a rNam par snang mdzad statue.

264 G: 6–7: *ma 'ongs lnga bcu khar la dus / / padma nga yi sprul pa'i sku / / myang gi rigs 'khrungs sprel lo ba / btul (brtul) zhugs spyod pa smyon pa'i ming / mthong thos dran reg byang chug thob /.*

265 This is one of the few instances in the *rnam thars* of gTsang smyon when a rNying ma connection is displayed. Given the fact that many bKa' brgyud masters had close ties to the rNying ma school, in combination with the general tendency to mix traditions in Tibetan Buddhism, especially bKa' brgyud and rNying ma, it is somewhat surprising that there are so few connections between gTsang smyon and the rNying ma tradition. The fact that gTsang smyon's own student and biographer rGod tshang ras pa had close ties to the rNying ma tradition makes this even more surprising. It would seem logical to find more references to rNying ma teachings and/or rNying ma masters in the *rnam thars* about gTsang smyon but, as we will see, there are very few such references.

The examples above show how gTsang smyon's disciples, in similar but not identical ways, try to demonstrate that their master was not an ordinary being, but an emanation (*sprul pa*) of enlightenment. He was foretold in many sūtras, and according to rGod tshang ras pa, in *gter ma*-texts as well. gTsang smyon was Buddha Śākyamuni himself or perhaps Padmasambhava who is seen as a second Buddha by the Tibetans. dNgos grub dpal 'bar sees no contradiction in the fact that his master is sometimes said to be an emanation of the Buddha and sometimes of Padmasambhava.

> It also does not contradict U ryan's [Urgyan=Padmasambhava] prophecy, because in general it is said that a single basis for emanation will emanate into one billion emanations, and in particular because it is prophesied that U ryan pa himself is an emanation of the Buddha.[266]

Previous Incarnations

gTsang smyon is not only seen as an emanation (*sprul pa*) of a buddha, but he is also often held to be an incarnation (*sprul sku*) of a particular Buddhist master. The *sprul sku*-system of spiritual transmission was increasingly gaining popularity when gTsang smyon's disciples wrote their hagiographies, and it is only natural that they tried to see their teacher as an emanation *sprul pa* and/or an incarnation *sprul sku*.[267]

gTsang smyon seems to have been a bit skeptical towards the incarnation system. According to Gene Smith, gTsang smyon considered the emulation of the lives of the great masters of the past to be more important than the incarnation lineage to which a teacher belonged.[268] That this indeed seems to be gTsang smyon's opinion is shown in one of his most important works, the *Life of Milarepa*. Peter Alan Roberts and others have pointed out that gTsang smyon's version of Milarepa's hagiography was the first to present the cotton-clad yogin as an ordinary being instead of an incarnation of a buddha.[269] This innovation made it easier for ordinary persons to identify with Milarepa, which probably contributed to the popularity of gTsang smyon's version.

However, despite gTsang smyon's attempts to reduce the importance of the incarnation system, both he and his disciples had some thoughts about his former incarnations. According to the Buddhist way of thinking, every

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[266] N: 4a: *u ryan gyi lung stan dang yang mi 'gal te / phyir sprul gzhi gcig gis / sprul pa bye ba phrag brgya sprul par bshad cing / khyad par uryan (urgyan) nyid kyang / sangs rgyas kyi sprul pa yin par lung bstan pas so /.*

[267] For a discussion of how these two terms are used and how complicated the ideas about reincarnation and emanation are, see, for example, Roberts 2007: 231.

[268] Smith 2001: 61.

[269] Roberts 2007: 58. In Chapter 9 a more detailed discussion of gTsang smyon's life story of Milarepa will be provided.

sentient being is born repeatedly and the historical Buddha was a bodhisattva for innumerable lives before attaining enlightenment. Therefore, it is logical that a great master such as gTsang smyon had been an important master in his previous incarnations as well.

Several incidents in the life stories show how people speculated about gTsang smyon's previous lives. In the *Heart of the Sun* it is mentioned that Chos rje gYam spyil ba announced to gTsang smyon that he had dreamt that gTsang smyon was Tilopa in a previous life. gTsang smyon answered: "That may indeed be your vision. I am [indeed] one who upholds the tradition of Tilopa. I have no idea whether I am an incarnation or not."[270]

On another occasion the head lama of the gNya' nang monastery asked gTsang smyon:

> Precious Lord! Whichever activity of yours one observes, it is not worthy of any but one of the incarnations of a Buddha or Bodhisattva, whoever it may be. In the opinion of the people, it is such as the Reverend Lord Ras chung pa and Ngan rdzong ston pa. Concerning whose incarnation, the rumours are not in agreement, and there are various opinions. Which is it? Please tell whose incarnation you are, and who is the extraordinary master in Lord Mi la ras pa's *Life*.[271]

On this occasion gTsang smyon offered a response that provides some information regarding his opinion. He said that, "You will understand whose incarnation I am by looking at the footprint at Ras chen Cave in La phyi and the [identity of the] extraordinary master will become evident when I have died."[272] This enigmatic answer did not stop the speculations about gTsang smyon's previous incarnations, but it did actually contain some clues. Ilze Maruta Stearns [Kalnins] and Andrew Quintman have shown that a close reading of the *Heart of the Sun*, where the above quotations are found, shows that gTsang smyon, in the eyes of rGod tshang ras pa, considered himself to be a reincarnation of Milarepa.[273] If this was solely rGod tshang ras pa's opinion, or if it actually was what gTsang smyon himself believed, is difficult to know. Other close disciples had other opinions regarding their lama's previ-

[270] Smith 2001: 61–62; G: 132: *de kyed rang gi dag snang yin mod / nga te lo'i rgyud 'dzin ni yin / / sprul pa yin min nga rang la'ang rgyus med gsung /.*

[271] Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 78; G: 153–153: *rje rin po che lags khyed kyi mdzad pa gang la ltas rung sangs rgyas byang chub sems dpa' gang rung gcig gi rnams sprul las 'os mi 'dug cing mi rnams kyi zer lugs la rje btsun ras chug pa / ngan rdzong ston pa sogs gang gi sprul pa yin la kha mi 'cham zhing zer lugs sna tshogs pa gcig 'dug pa gang lags pa / gang gi sprul pa yin dang rje btsun mi la'i rnam thar na yod pa'i thung mong ma yin pa'i slob dpon su yin rnams gsung du gsol zhus tshe /.*

[272] Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 78; G: 153–154: *nga su'i sprul pa yin la phyi ras chen phug gi zhabs rjes la ltas pas shes / thun mong ma yin pa'i slob dpon nga shi nas ston yong gsung /.*

[273] Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 66–83. Andrew Quintman also has shown that this is the case, and he mentions that also dNgos grub dpal 'bar recorded gTsang smyon's own words as explicitly admitting his status as Milarepa's incarnation. rGod tshang ras pa thus followed dNgos grub dpal 'bar's older biographical account (Quintman 2006: 262).

ous incarnations. Lha btsun thought that gTsang smyon had been Tilopa, for example.[274] Stearns [Kalnins] who has devoted attention to this question in her master's thesis argues convincingly that gTsang smyon shared rGod tshang ras pa's opinion and actually made it clear that he had been Milarepa previously.[275] gTsang smyon never said this directly, but he did say and do things that, taken as a whole, indicate that this seem to have been his opinion. Due to gTsang smyon's vagueness regarding his previous incarnations, speculations about gTsang smyon's former lives continued. Several centuries later well-known lamas expressed different opinions about gTsang smyon's former incarnations. Thu'u bkwan bLo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737–1802) thought that he was a reincarnation of Milarepa's teacher, Marpa (1012–1093?).[276] Later, two prominent figures of the non-sectarian movement (*ris med*), 'Jam mgon Kong sprul (1813–1899) and 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse dbang po (1820–1892) stated that gTsang smyon was an incarnation of Ras chung pa.[277]

To sum up, it was generally believed that gTsang smyon was a reincarnation of a great bKa' brgyud master of the past, but there was no consensus regarding who it was. Some people claimed that it was Ras chung pa or Ngan rdzong ston pa. rGod tshang ras pa and other disciples (and perhaps gTsang smyon himself), asserted that it was Milarepa; Lha btsun and Chos rje gYam spyil pa that it was Tilopa; Thu'u bkwan that it was Marpa; mKhyen brtse dbang po and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul that it was Ras chung pa—and there were probably several other candidates as well.

The Birth: Chos rgyal lhun po—The Dharma King Mountain—is Born

> I bow down to you, who showed many miracles when you entered the womb and were born,
> And who in the amusing games of childhood endeavored in virtuous actions.[278]

gTsang smyon was born in gTsang, the most western of the two provinces that constitute central Tibet (dBus-gTsang). Southeast of the famous town

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[274] L: 128.
[275] Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 66–83. Especially, pp. 79–83.
[276] Smith 2001: 145.
[277] 'Jam mgon Kong sprul is quoted in Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 78. mKhyen brtse states this in his guide to the holy places of Central Tibet that is available in English translation (Ferrari 1958: 51).
[278] L: 4: *khyod sku lhums zhugs bltams tshe ltas bzang stan / / gzhon nu'i rol rtsed dge ba'i las la brtson / [...] 'dud /.*

gZhis ka rtse in gTsang lies the land of Myang or Nyang.[279] This region includes the entire fertile valley of the Myang chu river and it is divided into three parts: upper Myang (Myang stod), middle Myang (Myang bar) and lower Myang (Myang smad). The most famous and important town in Myang is rGyal rtse, situated about 67 kilometers southeast of gZhis ka rtse in upper Myang. rGyal rtse is famous for the remarkable octagonal sKu 'bum Stūpa that was completed in 1427. The stūpa is situated in the great monastic complex of rGyal rtse, dPal 'khor chos sde, or as it was called in the oldest references, dPal 'khor bde chen.

If one follows the Myang chu river from rGyal rtse and continues north one arrives in sTag rtse. In sTag rtse there was a temple attributed to the ancient dharma king Khri srong lde btsan, and in its territory was a locality called sTag tshal where there stood a castle known by the name of Mon 'gro.[280] East of sTag rtse in a large valley was a village called mKhar kha or bKra shis mkhar kha.[281] dPal ldan bzang po laid the foundations of this village (mKhar kha), rTse chen, Lhun grub rtse and gGyal rtse 1365.[282] It was in mKhar kha that gTsang smyon Heruka was born.

gTsang smyon's birth is described in a similar way in the three *rnam thars*, some details varying, but the overall picture being almost identical.

Before Birth

In the *Heart of the Sun,* rGod tshang ras pa desribes how Milarepa attained enlightenment in one lifetime, and it is then mentioned how Milarepa's aspiration prayers and his powerful resolve to benefit beings spread his enlightened activities in countless buddha fields. Finally, "light of wisdom and compassion radiated from the spontaneously existing sphere of Akaniṣṭha to this land of the northern direction (Tibet), and the great nirmāṇakāya entered his mother's womb."[283]

The entire episode resembles Buddha Śākyamuni's birth, as it is depicted in the famous hagiographies *Lalitavistara* and *Buddhacarita*. Just like the Buddha, gTsang smyon dwelled in a heavenly sphere, not Tuṣita as the former, but Akaniṣṭha, and when the time was ripe he descended to Earth to enter the womb of his mother. gTsang smyon was thus seen as an extraordinary being, a bodhisattva or perhaps an emanation of a buddha, who took birth for the sole reason of benefitting beings and the teachings.

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279 For information about Myang/Nyang see Tucci 1989 a: 47–72, for a more recent description, see Gyurme Dorje 2004: 265–275.

280 Tucci 1989 a: 56, 68.

281 See Tucci 1989 b: 259, n. 3. The spelling varies; sometimes it is spelled 'Khar dga'. According to a local informant bKra shis mKhar kha is known as Min grol gling (not to be confused with the famous rNying ma pa monastery with the same name) nowadays.

282 Franco Ricca and Erberto Lo Bue 1993: 14.

283 G: 13: *byang phyogs gi zhing 'dir 'og min lhun gyi grub pa'i zhing khams nas / mkhyen rtse ye shes kyi 'od zer spros pa las / sprul sku chen po yum gyi lhums su zhugs /.*

It would be improper for such an exalted being to enter the womb of an ordinary woman, and gTsang smyon therefore entered the womb of a wisdom ḍākinī (*ye shes mkha' 'gro*) named Sangs rgyas 'dren.[284] gTsang smyon's father, Sangs rgyas dPal ldan, was a "mantra-holder" (*sngags 'chang*), a term sometimes translated as "village lama".[285]

gTsang smyon's mother, Sangs rgyas 'dren, had a particularly close relation to her son. Her dreams and visions were regarded as very important by the authors of the *rnam thars*, and gTsang smyon himself seems to have had a close relationship with, and much respect for her. Even when gTsang smyon later became a mad yogin, famous for disregarding the opinions of others, he occasionally visited his mother and followed her advice. gTsang smyon's father, on the other hand, is only mentioned when gTsang smyon's birth is described and then disappears from the account altogether. The close relationship between mother and son is also seen in other life stories, most notably perhaps the life of Milarepa, where the strong and emotional relationship between Milarepa and his mother is an important part of the narrative. The importance of one's mother is often stressed in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and a common method to develop compassion is to see all sentient beings as one's previous mothers.[286]

Sangs rgyas 'dren and Sangs rgyas dPal ldan had five children, three sons and two daughters. gTsang smyon was the next youngest of them, and his brothers are mentioned by name in the biographies. Gene Smith mentions that all three brothers became well-known religious personages of their time.[287]

Lha btsun depicts a dream that their mother had during her pregnancy with gTsang smyon's older brother Sog po rgyal mtshan:

> When the oldest of the three sons A ra pa tsatsha [Sogs po rgyal mtshan] was in the womb of *mkha' 'gro* Sangs rgyas 'dren, his mother one night dreamt of a red fearful woman with bone ornaments. [The woman] gave her three eggs, a white one, a red one, and an indigo colored one, and said, "Eat these and the three—Sog po rgyal mtshan, Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan and dKon mchog rgyal mtshan—will be born; their renown will fill the world." After dreaming [the red lady] disappeared like a rainbow. Then the boy was born and when

284 The term wisdom ḍākinī is used for female enlightened beings; these could be humans or *yi dams* such as Vajravārāhī. It should also be noted that the term is used in colloquial Tibetan for the wife of a yogin or the mother of an incarnated lama.

285 Both Stearns [Kalnins] and Smith translated the term with village lama (Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 21, Smith 2001: 63). If this is correct gTsang smyon's parents were Buddhist practitioners who had achieved recognition and perhaps officiated in the village when religious services were needed. That parents of an important lama are extraordinary individuals is taken for granted by many Tibetans, so it is difficult to know whether gTsang smyon's parents actually were regarded as accomplished practitioners before gTsang smyon was born, or if they were given such titles and/or functions retrospectively.

286 See, for instance, Kongtrul 1987: 12.

287 Smith 2001: 63.

> the time of talking arrived he automatically said A RA PA TSATSHA NA DHI,[288] and was also given the name A ra pa tsatsha.[289]

gTsang smyon's younger brother, dKon mchog rgyal mtshan (born 1453) is often mentioned in the *rnam thars*, and just like gTsang smyon he was seen as an emanation foretold in prophecies. gTsang smyon had a close relationship with him, and the two brothers often traveled together. dKon mchog rgyal mtshan is often called *dbon po* or *dbon po brten 'brel ba* in the *rnam thars*, and this is confusing since *dbon po* usually means nephew.[290] Stearns [Kalnins] assumes that this is either a scribal error, or that *dbon po* might be a local usage for younger brother.[291] rGod tshang ras pa asserts that dKon mchog rgyal mtshan was an emanation of an activity protector (*las kyi mgon po*) called The Raven Faced One (Bya rog gdong).[292]

Not only gTsang smyon's parents and siblings were extraordinary, but the family (*rigs*) and lineage (*gdung*) to which they belonged were extraordinary as well. The name of the lineage was *Myang* and it had produced famous saints such as Myang ral pa can.[293]

During the pregnancy, gTsang smyon's mother (Sangs rgyas 'dren) felt happiness and physical lightness, and even if she did not eat she never felt hunger.[294] She also had several dreams that indicated that her expected child was very special and destined for great things. This is another common feature of *rnam thars*; the mother of the great female master Ma gcig lab sgron (1055–1153), for example, felt light and happy while pregnant. In addition, just like gTsang smyon's mother, she had auspicious dreams.[295] A *rnam thar* about Ma gcig lab sgron describes that when her mother was pregnant, despite being a rather old mother (48 years), her complexion became youthful again.[296]

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288 This is the mantra of Mañjuśrī.

289 L: 4–5: *mkha' 'gro sangs rgyas 'dren la sras gsum 'khrungs pa'i che ba a ra pa tshatsha la 'khris pa'i dus su / yum la nub cig gi mnal lam du bud med dmar mo rus pa'i rgyan can 'jigs pa cig gis sgong dkar dmar 'thing gsum byin nas de zo dang sog po rgyal mtshan / sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan / dkon mchog rgyal mthan gsum skyes nas 'dzam gling grags pas 'gengs so zer ba rmi nas 'ja' ltar yal song / de nas sprug gu de btsam te smra ba'i dus tshod la sleb pa'i tshe a ra pa tsatsha na dhi rang byung la smras nas / ming la yang a ra pa tsatsha ra btags so /.*

290 See, for instance, G: 7; 15; N: 4b.

291 Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 53, n. 27. The fact that the same word is used in both G and N indicates that it is not a scribal error (see, for example, N: 4b).

292 G: 15.

293 This probably refers to the famous *gter ston* Nyang ral pa can nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192). For a description of Nyang ral pa can's encounter with a mad master, see above (p. 15).

294 G: 7; N: 3b; L: 5.

295 Edou 1996: 122–125.

296 Edou 1996: 125.

When gTsang smyon's mother had been pregnant for six months some cotton clad yogins (*ras pa*) arrived in a dream.[297] The *ras pa*s sang beautifully and the mother went to them. One of them said that he was Ras chung and gave her an amulet (*ga'u*). "Wear this and all your wishes will be accomplished!" he said.[298]

About a month later she dreamt about seven suns, and when the rays of the suns reached her, she experienced a mental state that was free of concepts for a while.[299]

Despite the pleasant nature of those dreams Sangs rgyas 'dren became a bit worried. The Glorious Lady of Zha lu (Zha lu dpal ldan ma) told her not to worry about her son and dispelled her worries in a dream the following night.[300]

Birth

Then, finally, after ten months of pregnancy, when the time, day and star constellation were very auspicious the extraordinary child was born.[301] The year was a Male Water-Monkey year[302] called Ang gi ra in Tibetanized Sanskrit (1452);[303] the time was the full moon day (15th day) of the fifth Hor month; the day was Thursday; and the stellar constellation was *dkar rgyal*.[304] gTsang smyon's birth was unlike that of normal children, but resembled the birth of the Buddha:

[297] *Ras pa* is the name used for yogins dressed in cotton clothes (*ras*). This dress is a sign that they had accomplished the practice of inner heat (*gtum mo*).
[298] L: 5: *di thogs dang don thams cad 'grub pa yin no zer ba cig [...] /.*
[299] L: 5; N: 3b.
[300] G: 13; L: 5; N: 3b. Zha lu/Zhwa lu is the name of a district in gTsang where there is a famous monastery of the same name. The Glorious Lady is probably a female protector of this area.
[301] gTsang smyon's birth is described in G: 13; L: 5; N: 4a.
[302] Tibetans consider the year of the monkey particularly auspicious, and it is believed that both Buddha Śākyamuni and Padmasambhava were born in a Monkey year. The Monkey year was also the year chosen for the "great ravine circuit of Tsari" (*Tsā ri rong skor chen mo*), (Huber 1999: 128 and 253, n. 1). It is also during a Monkey year that 'Brug chen rin po che, the head of 'Brug pa bka' brgyud, performs the famous ceremony of Nāropa's bone ornaments.
[303] In *The Life of Shabkar* it is also said that the Male Water-Monkey year is called *Angira* (*The Life of Shabkar: the Autobiography of a Tibetan Yogin* 1997: 245). According to Stearns [Kalnins] *Ang gir* is Sanskrit for *chu pho spre'u*. She also mentions that in Tibetan astrology, each year has three names: Tibetan, Sanskrit and Chinese (Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 46, n. 1).
[304] This is the name of a star, a corresponding constellation, and the associated lunar month. In Sanskrit it is called *puṣya*. Both *Lalitavistara* and *Buddhacarita* states that the Buddha was born when the *puṣya* constellation appeared (*The Lalitavistara Sūtra, the Voice of the Buddha, The Beauty of Compassion*, 1983: 124, Aśvaghoṣa 1992: 3).

The [birth] of the great being who distributed miraculous substances, the glorious Laughing Vajra (gZhad pa rdo rje),[305] [was] similar to the birth of Vajradhara, the supreme nirmāṇakāya teacher, the perfect and complete Buddha Śākya thub pa, prince Siddhārtha, who was born in the gardens of Lumbinī in the noble land as the son of King Śuddhodana. When the Body (*sku*) was born the umbilical cord of the young bodhisattva was longer than that of ordinary people and formed in the manner of a meditation belt and he had folded palms. He uttered the indestructible mantra: A HAṀ and his mind did not move from the natural state of Mahāmudrā. Also at that time, the earth shook seven times in six different ways and eighteen signs [appeared]. A rain of flowers from the virtuous gods and so forth [fell from the sky] and many offering-clouds of divine substances were offered. All the people nearby had sensations of sounds of music and fragrant smells. At that time everybody was in a state of joy and inspiration, [and] an excellent celebration was held for three nights and days and [gTsang smyon] was given the name Chos rgyal lhun po (Dharma King Mountain).[306]

After his birth, happiness and prosperity pervaded the area for many years. Diseases ceased and the crops were very good.[307] This could be compared with the description of what happened after the birth of the Buddha found in *Lalitavistara*:

As soon as the Bodhisattva was born, great pleasure filled all beings. All were delivered from desire, hatred, and ignorance, pride, sadness, depression, and fear. They were freed from attachment, jealousy, and greed, and gave up all actions, which were contrary to virtue. The sick were cured; the hungry and thirsty were no longer oppressed by hunger and thirst. Those maddened by drink lost their obsession. The mad recovered their senses, the blind regained sight, and the deaf once more could hear. The halt and lame obtained perfect limbs, the poor gained riches, and prisoners were delivered from their bonds.[308]

[305] This refers to gTsang smyon and it shows that rGod tshang ras pa considered gTsang smyon to be an emanation of gZhad pa rdo rje (Milarepa).

[306] G: 13–14: *mngon 'phags yul lun pa'i 'tshal (tshal) du rdo rje 'chang gi mchog gi sprul sku ston pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas shākya thub pa de nyid / rgyal po zas gtsang gi sras rgyal bu don grub du sku bstams pa dang tshul mtshungs par dpal ldan gzhad pa rdo rje rgyud 'phrul bgod pa'i bdag nyid / rgyal sras gzhon nu nyid sku'i lta ba'i thag pa / skye bo phal pa las mchog du ring bas dpus 'khyud (pus 'khyud) kyi tshul du mdzad cing phyag thal mo sbyar ba dang bcas / gsung a haṃ mi shig pa'i bsngag su sgrogs shing / thugs gnas lugs phyag rgya chen po las g.yos pa med par sku ltams so / / de'i tshe sa chen po 'di yang rnam pa drug dang ltas bco brgyad du lan bdun g.yos shing / dkar phyogs gyi lha rnams kyi me tog gi char sogs lha rdzas kyi mchod sprin du mas mchod pas / rol mo'i sgra dang dri bzangs nye'khor kun gyis tshor ba byung ngo / / der kun dga' spro'i dang nas zhag gsum gyi nyin rtsas ston bzang po dang bcas mtshan chos rgyal lhun por gsol lo /.*

[307] G: 14; N: 4a.

[308] *The Lalitavistara Sūtra, the Voice of the Buddha, the Beauty of Compassion*, 1983: 133. For the same passage in Sanskrit, see *Lalita-vistara* 1958: 63.

Childhood

According to all three hagiographers, gTsang smyon was cared for with love and affection, and as a young child he amazed those who met him.[309] His behavior and children's games all indicated that he was an extraordinary individual, linked with Buddhist teaching and practice. The many auspicious dreams that his mother had during her pregnancy did not cease after gTsang smyon's birth, but continued to appear and influence her.

When gTsang smyon was eight months old a small boy with a beautiful voice appeared in a dream, sitting high above the ground among a large group of women who were adorned with bone ornaments and played hand drums (*ḍamaru*). gTsang smyon's mother became afraid that the child would fall down to the ground and get hurt, but the small boy comforted her saying: "Mother you do not need to worry; riding a white lion I sit in space."[310] Hearing the young child say this Sangs rgyas 'dren (gTsang smyon's mother) woke up.

One month later a severe case of tonsillitis threatened gTsang smyon's life and they consulted various doctors. No matter which skilful doctor was consulted, no one found any remedy, and his condition continued to get worse. Divinations were performed but no cure for the child was found. Then, one night, on the full moon day (the 15th), a white lady appeared in a dream and told Sangs rgyas 'dren that since the boy of hers was destined to benefit sentient beings and the Buddhist doctrine, recitation of mantra would cure him. His mother answered that she did not know what mantra to recite and the white lady said that it would suffice to recite the *maṇi* mantra.[311] When gTsang smyon's mother woke up, she immediately did as the white lady in the dream had said and gTsang smyon was cured.[312]

The dreams of gTsang smyon's mother continued to appear, and as already seen, these dreams were often prophetic. Significant Buddhist figures appeared and revealed important pieces of information about her son. The next important dream-visitor was the great master Padmasambhava. This key figure in Tibetan Buddhism, who is important in visionary revelations in Tibet, appeared in a dream on the 10th day of the Tibetan month when gTsang smyon was ten months old.[313] Surrounded by many ḍākinīs, Padmasambhava made the following statement: "Outside of sTag tshal nang, my

[309] G: 14; L: 5; N: 4a.
[310] G: 14–15; L: 6–7; N: 4a–4b: *a ma sdug bsngal byed mi dgos / nga seng ge dkar mo la zhon nas bar snang la sdad yod /*.
[311] *Oṃ maṇipadme huṃ*.
[312] G: 15; L: 6; N: 4b.
[313] G: 15. According to Lha btsun this incident happened when gTsang smyon was one year old, and Padmasambhava appeared not in a dream but when gTsang smyon's mother was praying to him. The actual content of Padmasambhava's prophetic message was similar, though (L: 7). dNgos grub dpal 'bar does not mention this incident. The tenth lunar month is connected with Padmasambhava.

emanation will be a person of the Monkey year. Wherever the shadow of his body falls, the path of liberation will be attained. If a bird pulls a monkey by the nose,[314] the world will be full of light."[315]

These kinds of prophetic sayings usually need to be interpreted, and both rGod tshang and Lha btsun explain this particular prophecy in similar ways. According to them, the bird refers to gTsang smyon's brother dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, who was born in a bird year, and the monkey refers to gTsang smyon, who was born in a Monkey year.[316] The statement about the bird that was supposed to lead or pull the monkey by the nose could be an indication that dKon mchog rgyal mtshan later accompanied gTsang smyon on many of his escapades. Another interesting thing revealed in this prophecy is the fact that gTsang smyon is once again said to be an emanation of the great master from U rgyan (Padmasambhava). The dream thus confirms the message of the above-quoted *gter ma*.

Youth

Later, when gTsang smyon was around one year of age[317] he sat in full meditation position with his eyes fixed for twenty-one days.[318] This was an indication that the young child was a reincarnation of a great meditation master and was destined to become a yogin. When older, gTsang smyon practised much meditation and he stressed the importance of meditation practice in his teachings.

The prophetic dreams continued to appear and the most important was perhaps a dream that his mother had when gTsang smyon was about one year old. A black man, adorned with bone ornaments and with his hair tied up in a topknot, appeared. The yogin opened the face(s) of the boy(s)[319] and inserted several volumes of holy books in him (them).[320]

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314 Literally, if a bird pulls a monkey-nose, meaning if someone of the bird sign leads someone of the monkey sign. *sPre sna bya yis drangs nas.*

315 G: 15: *stag tshal nang gi phyi rol nas / / nga yi sprul pa sprel lo pa / / de'i lus kyis grib ma ni / / 'phog pa tshun chang thar lam thob / spre sna bya yis drangs nas ni / 'dzam gling 'od kyi 'gengs par 'gyur /.*
Similar passage found in L: 7.

316 G: 15; L: 7.

317 According to rGod tshang ras pa and dNgos grub dpal 'bar he was more than one year old when he sat in meditation (G: 15; N: 4b) and according to Lha btsun he was 10 months old (L: 6).

318 L: 6, N: 4b. Both Lha btsun and dNgos grub dpal 'bar state that this information came from gTsang smyon's mother. According to rGod tshang ras pa he sat in meditation for three days, not twenty-one (G: 15).

319 According to both Lha btsun and dNgos grub dpal 'bar it is plural (*gzhon dag*) and if this is the case perhaps both gTsang smyon and his brother(s?) had texts inserted in them by the mysterious yogin (L: 6; N: 4b).

320 G: 16; L: 6–7; N: 4b–5a.

This dream is a prophecy about one of gTsang smyon's most important exploits, the compilation/composition of an Aural Transmission collection.[321] The hagiographers identify the black man in the dream as the Indian siddha Tilopa—the first human guru of the bKa' brgyud lineage, who is regarded as an emanation of one of the main bKa' brgyud *yi dams*, Cakrasaṃvara.[322]

The episode shows that gTsang smyon received these teachings in a mystical way directly from Tilopa, who was regarded as Cakrasaṃvara in person. These kinds of mystical transmissions are common in both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism. They are of particular importance in the Tibetan treasure tradition (*gter ma*). In the treasure tradition a great master, usually Padmasambhava, gives a certain teaching to a particular disciple who in a later incarnation, when the right time and circumstances arise, discovers the same teaching as a treasure (*gter ma*) and thereby becomes a treasure revealer (*gter ston*).[323] This is an effective way of showing that seemingly new teachings are actually the words of a buddha. If the teaching is not new, like in the case of gTsang smyon and the Aural Transmission, it is a way of confirming that the person in question has a mandate to function as a representative of the great masters from whom the lineage once sprung. His mother's dream shows that gTsang smyon had been chosen by Tilopa to propagate these esoteric oral instructions. Later in his life, as we will see, gTsang smyon fulfilled his obligation, and the seed that Tilopa had planted in him when he was a small child bore fruit.

Leaving the dreams and prophecies aside, let us now turn to the way in which gTsang smyon showed that he was extraordinary. As noted above he had already sat in meditation for a long period when he was just a baby. Lha btsun describes how he continued to surprise his surroundings with his unusual behavior:

> When he was two years old, he sometimes stood up, holding his hands in prayer on top of his head, and spontaneously and repeatedly said, "I salute the master Mi la (Milarepa)! I salute the glorious Phag mo grub pa![324] I salute the victorious rGod tshang pa!"[325]
>
> At the age of three, in all his children's games he was teaching dharma. In addition, after holding a small copper vase he said, "I will bestow empowerment," and he put it (the vase) on the heads of all, strong as well as weak. When he was four and five he was sitting in Vajra-posture most of the time,

[321] I will return to the Aural Transmission and describe it in more detail in Chapter 4 and Chapter 9.
[322] G: 16.
[323] For a description of the treasure tradition written by a Tibetan lama, see Thondup 1997. For a study of the Indian predecessors of the Tibetan treasure tradition, see Mayer 1994.
[324] Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po (1110–1170), one of the most important masters of the bKa' brgyud tradition. He was a disciple of sGam po pa and from Phag mo gru pa's disciples many suborders of the bKa' brgyud tradition arose.
[325] rGod tshang pa mgon po rdo rje (1189–1258). The founder of the sTod 'brug tradition, a subschool of the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud.

with his hands in the posture of equanimity (*mnyam bzhag*) and his eyes fixed. At six he perfected his reading knowledge, and since he was very diligent in reading the words of the Buddha, he memorized *'Jam*,[326] *sDud*[327] and *bZang*,[328] and always recited. When he was seven, he thoroughly knew the writing styles and the different kinds of letters.[329]

rGod tshang ras pa gives a somewhat similar account of gTsang smyon's extraordinary childhood. All his actions and games were related to the Buddhist doctrine and practice, and proved that he was linked to the dharma, or as expressed by rGod tshang ras pa, "he showed that he carried the blessing of previous virtuous deeds" (*rnam dkar kyi las 'phro*).[330] This kind of behavior is often found in *rnam thar*s dealing with the childhood of a great Tibetan master.[331] In his autobiography 'Jam mgon Kong sprul describes how, as soon as he could walk, he started to wear a monk's shawl. Kong sprul continues:

> In my childhood games, I would spend my entire time playing at bestowing empowerments, erecting miniature temples and ancient castles, making *tormas* out of earth, and performing *torma* rituals and *lhasang* ceremonies. When I saw such ritual implements as vajras and bells, I was extremely delighted. So there were many excellent signs of my connection with and propensity toward the Buddhist teaching.[332]

The *rnam thar*s about gTsang smyon thus follow the same pattern as many other *rnam thar*s, something that is aptly illustrated in the following passage of the *Heart of the Sun*:

> Then when he was six years old, after gathering the children in various places such as mKhar kha'i skyid de phug and so forth, he played games of drawing maṇḍalas, arranging offerings, performing gaṇacakra-feasts, preaching dharma and so forth, and since all he did was the performance of a Vajra master, even ordinary persons were astonished and amazed. In the boy's [gTsang

326 *'Jam* is short for *'Jam dpal mtshan brjod, Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* (*Utterance of the Names of Mañjuśrī*). This is the name of a common hymn of praise to Mañjuśrī.
327 *mDo sdud pa* (*A Synopsis of Sūtras*).
328 *bZang po spyod pa'i smon lam*, (*Aspiration of Noble Exalted Conduct*) is a very popular prayer.
329 L: 7: *dgung lo gnyis pa'i dus na re 'ga' bzhengs nas thal mo spyi bor sbyar te / rje btsun mi la la phyag 'tshal lo / dpal phag mo grub pa la phyag tshal lo / rgyal rgod tshang pa la phyag 'tshal lo gsung pa yang yang du rang rdol la byung ngo / dgung lo gsum pa'i dus na byis pa'i rtse mo thams cad chos 'chad nyan dang / zangs kyi bum chung cig yong pa de thogs nas ngas dbang bskur gyis gsung grag zhan kun gyi mgo bor 'jog pa mdzad do / dgung lo bzhi pa dang lnga pa la bzhugs pa phal cher rdo rje'i dkyil dkrungs / phyag mnyam gzhag mdzad nas spyan hur re bzhugs / drug pa la klog rdzogs par mkhyen te gsung sgrogs la shin du brtson pas 'jam sdud bzang gsum thugs la bcug ste rgyun du zhal 'don mdzad / bdun pa la chung 'bris dang srog gzugs la sogs pa'i bri cha rnams mkhyen cing thugs su chud /.*
330 G: 16.
331 See, for example, Dowman and Paljor 1983: 38; Guenther 1986: 9; Edou 1996: 126–127.
332 Kongtrul 2003: 8.

smyon's] own dreams he saw many ḍākinīs of the five families performing sacramental feasts, and a boat that delivered many beings from a great river, and after seizing the sun and moon in his hands he waved them back and forth. [Finally he dreamt that he] flew in the sky.[333]

The dominating themes of gTsang smyon's childhood and youth were his extraordinary qualities that were displayed by miraculous dreams, prophecies, and not least by his natural tendency to practise and teach Buddhism. The next phase of his life was dominated by another important Buddhist theme, namely renunciation.

[333] G: 16: *de nas dgung lo drug gi dus su mkhar kha'i skyid de phug sogs gnas so sor byis pa'i 'khor tshogs bsdus nas / sku'i rtsed mo thams cad dkyil 'khor 'bri ba dang / mchod pa bsham pa / tshogs kyi 'khor lo bskor ba / chos 'chad pa sogs rdo rje slob dpon gyi bya ba kho na mdzad pas / skye bo phal pha rnams kyang ya mtshan zhing ngo mtshar du byung ngo / gzon nu rang gi mnal lam du mkha' 'gro rigs lngas gsang ba'i tshogs mchod 'bul ba dang / sems can mang po chu chen po las grus sgral ba (sgrol ba) dang / nyi zla phyag du bzung nas phan tshun bde bas zhing nam mkha' la 'phur ba rnams byung ngo /.*

Chapter 4: The Exceptional Monk

The Ordination: Chos rgyal lhun po becomes Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan—The Victory Banner of the Buddha

> When you saw the faults of samsara you took ordination in the Teaching,
> the eight dharmas[334] made you disgusted, [and] holy men followed in your track,
> [to you gTsang smyon I bow down].[335]

At the age of seven, gTsang smyon felt a strong revulsion towards cyclic existence and the pleasures associated with it. Things that other beings strived to obtain gTsang smyon wanted nothing to do with. For him even the greatest happiness of samsara resembled food mixed with poison or a heap of filth full of flies.[336] Samsara was like a "pit of fire" (*me 'obs*) in the young boy's eyes[337] and not even the happiness of the highest god, Tshangs pa (Brahmā), attracted him.[338]

gTsang smyon's renunciation was mixed with an equally strong feeling of compassion towards the beings who suffer in samsara. Motivated by renunciation and compassion he decided that whatever the cost he must obtain the state of peace, the highest liberation from samsara. Since he wanted to reach liberation in order to help all sentient beings who suffer in the various samsaric realms, the limited liberation of the *śravakas* and *pratyeka-buddhas* did not satisfy him. His only goal was the complete all-knowing state of buddhahood.[339]

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[334] The eight worldly dharmas (*'jig rten chos brgyad*) are: gain (*rnyed pa*), loss (*ma rnyed pa*), fame (*snyan pa*), obscurity (*mi snyan pa*), slander (*smad pa*), praise (*bstod pa*), pleasure (*bde ba*), and pain (*sdug bsngal*).
[335] L: 4: *'khor ba'i skyon gzigs bstan la rab tu byung / / chos brgyad zhen log dam pas rjes bzung* (*'dud*) /.
[336] G: 16.
[337] L: 7; N: 5a.
[338] G: 16.
[339] G: 17.

Overwhelmed with these feelings, gTsang smyon decided that he should become a monk, and when he was eight years old a great abbot (*mkhan chen*) named Kun dga' rgyal mtshan bestowed the monk's vows on him.[340]

The night before the ordination ceremony, the abbot had an auspicious dream that indicated that something of great importance were about to happen. When gTsang smyon showed up the following day the abbot thought that his dream portended gTsang smyon's ordination and said:

> "Last night I dreamt of throwing flowers to a man who was together with many friends who were arhats. It seems that this person will be of benefit for the teaching." [The abbot] was very compassionate and provided [gTsang smyon] with the requisites of a monk. Having given him the ordination name Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan (Victory Banner of the Buddha), he said, "You will be one who upholds the victory banner of the teachings."[341]

Not only the abbot had a dream in connection with the ordination ceremony, but, as so often before, gTsang smyon's mother dreamt a prophetic dream around the time of her son's ordination as well. She dreamt that her extraordinary son was herding cattle up a mountain,[342] a dream that indicated that gTsang smyon had an important future mission.

From this time onward Chos rgyal lhun po, as gTsang smyon had been called since birth, became Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan, and he was no longer an extraordinary child, but an extraordinary monk. The young monk amazed everyone with his strict discipline and astonishing talent.

During this period, both gTsang smyon and his mother continued to have prophetic dreams from time to time. The year after the ordination, when gTsang smyon was nine, he had a dream that indicated his connection with the tantric teachings, though this was not yet visible in his every-day behavior. In the dream, a black man gave him a hooked knife and spoke the following symbolic words: "All the beings you kill by performing wrathful activity will attain the path of liberation."[343]

The year after, another dream occurred that foretold gTsang smyon's future as a master who would spread the tantric teachings in various directions. In this dream, gTsang smyon arranged many offering cakes (*gtor ma*) and

[340] There are some discrepancies in the sources concerning what type of vows he received from the *mkhan po*. I will discuss this below. The information about gTsang smyon's age when he received the vows varies too. According to Lha btsun he was eight (L: 8) and according to rGod tshang ras pa he was seven (G: 16).

[341] N: 5a: *mdang nga'i rmi lam la / dgra bcom pa'i grogs mang po dang bcas / mi gcig la me tog gtor ba rmi / 'dis bstan pa la phan thogs pa yong pa 'dra gsung/ thugs shin du brtse bar mdzad cing / rab tu byung ba'i dngos po nod par mdzad de / rab tu byung ba'i mtshan sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan bya bar gsol te / bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan 'dzin pa cig 'ong gsung ngo /.* Compare with G: 17; L: 8.

[342] G: 17; N: 5a.

[343] N: 5a: *khyod kyis drag po'i phrin las grub pa yod pas gsad tshang thar lam du 'gro ba yin no.* Almost identical in G: 17; L: 8. Translated in Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 22.

bestowed empowerment (*dbang*) to many people who spoke different languages.[344]

When gTsang smyon was eleven, on the evening of the tenth day of the New Year, he dreamt about receiving tantric empowerment (*dbang*) and reading transmission (*lung*) from a tantric deity:

> He dreamt of a fearful palace with curtains and canopies made out of human skin. Inside was a burning mass of fire [situated] in a mansion made out of skulls. [There,] on a seat made of a lotus, sun, and corpse was a celestial person (*sku*) adorned with charnel-ground garments.
>
> When [gTsang smyon] woke up from the dream it was dawn and an unbearable splendor of great wisdom [filled the place]. At that time, he saw the whole sky in front of him filled with light and in the expanse of a mass of wisdom fire, he met with the glorious Lord of Secrets[345] in person. He had charnel-ground garments and was adorned with snakes. By the spreading and collecting of light [from the Lord of Secrets] empowerment was granted and after having given reading transmission (*lung*) of many tantras, such as Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra [to gTsang smyon], the indigo blue light fused into one. Then it melted into the heart of the young bodhisattva.[346]

gTsang smyon's mother continued to have prophetic dreams and in one of her dreams she dreamt that her son blew a big white conch and that the sound pervaded the entire world.[347] This dream also indicated gTsang smyon's future role as a master who would spread the Buddhist doctrine in the entire world.

Another dream that had a palpable result occurred when gTsang smyon had reached his twelfth year. At that time a group of women appeared in a dream and offered him gold. The following day gTsang smyon found a large quantity of gold and his family became rich.[348]

All these many spectacular dreams dominate the description of gTsang smyon's early life in the *rnam thar*s to such an extent that it is hard to know much about what happened when gTsang smyon was not asleep and dreaming. Only rGod tshang ras pa provides more detailed information about what

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344 G: 17.

345 *gSang ba'i bdag po* is a translation of the Sanskrit *Guhyapati*, the owner, the one in charge of the secret doctrine i.e., the tantric teachings, within the Buddhist teachings. It could be uses as an epithet of Phyag na rdo rje (Vajrapaṇi) or as an epithet of rNam thos sras (Vaiśravaṇa) or perhaps for some other tantric deity.

346 G: 17–18: [...] *rnal lam du / thod mkhar me dphung 'bar ba'i nang du mi lpags kyi bla res (bla re) dang yol ba sogs drag po'i gzhal yas khang gi dbus su / pad nyi ro gdan la sku dur khrod tshas kyis brgyan te bzhugs pa rmis rnal sad pa dang nam tho rangs su song 'dug cing / ye shes chen po'i zil mi bzod pa lta bu dang / mdun gyi nam mkha' thams cad 'od kyi gang 'dug pa gzigs tshe / dpal bsang ba'i (gsang ba'i) bdag po ye shes kyi me phung gi glong na / dur khrod kyi chas dang sbrul gyi rgyan pa dngos su mjal zhing 'od zer gyi spro bsdus dbang skur / bde mchog 'khor lo dang dges pa rdo rje sogs rgyud sde du ma'i lung gnang ba'i mthar / 'od mthing kha zhig du gyur nas rgyal sras gzhon nu'i thugs khar thim par gyur /.*

347 G: 17; L: 8; N: 5b.

348 G: 18; L: 8; N: 5b.

gTsang smyon did during this period besides having prophetic dreams. Lha btsun and dNgos grub dpal 'bar simply state that gTsang smyon completely renounced samsara and had a strong faith and devotion in the former bKa' brgyud lamas. Whenever he saw something beautiful, he offered it mentally to Milarepa and rGod tshang mgon po rdo rje (1189–1258) they say.[349]

rGod tshang ras pa, on the other hand, mentions gTsang smyon's enormous zeal in keeping his monastic vows undamaged. When gTsang smyon was thirteen, he made a small bag that he filled with deadly poison and hung around his neck. Then he made a solemn promise to swallow the poison if he ever violated his monastic vows. "If swallowing this will not kill me, may Pañjaranātha remove my heart's blood," he added.[350] Whenever some desire arose in the young monk's mind he just touched the bag around his neck and the desire disappeared. gTsang smyon's ability to guard his vows in this way made him a great example for other monks to follow, and he always "guarded his perfect discipline like his own eyes."[351]

Keeping his monastic discipline perfectly pure, he spent days and nights constantly reading scriptures, listening to teachings, and reflecting over the meaning of what he had heard and read. His only delight was dharma, and he always indulged in the ten dharma activities, namely: writing letters; making offerings; performing acts of generosity; listening to dharma; comprehending; reading; explaining; recitation; contemplating the meaning of dharma; and meditating on the meaning of dharma.[352]

During this time gTsang smyon felt a strong urge to depart for the snowy enclave of La phyi, to indulge in intensive meditation practice.[353] La phyi is a holy place situated on the Tibetan-Nepalese border, on a larger pilgrimage circuit, which traverses an area of related sites between the southern Ding ri plains, Chu bar in Brin to the east, and gNya' nang region to the west.[354] The place is associated with the tantric cycle of Cakrasaṃvara and the poet saint Milarepa. Toni Huber writes that La phyi is situated far away "from the great monastic centers and shrines of dBus and gTsang, [...] populated for centuries by only a handful of yak-herders and the occasional yogin seeking a solitary mountain retreat."[355] According to legend, the place was opened for

[349] L: 8; N: 5b.

[350] G: 18: *'di 'gams (gams) nas shi mi sdod na gur gyi mgon pos snying khrag phyung cig gsung*. Also the female master Chos kyi sgron ma (1422–1455) had Pañjaranātha (Gur mgon) as a witness when she took an oath, Diemberger 2007: 156. Gur mgon is a form of Mahākāla that is important in the Sa skya and Jo nang traditions.

[351] G: 18–19: *tshul khrims rnam par dag pa mig 'bras bzhin bsrung ba*.

[352] G: 19. rGod tshang ras pa only states that he performed the ten dharma activities (*chos kyi spyod pa bcu*) without enumerating them. The translations of the terms are taken from the Padma Karpo Translation Committee 2003.

[353] G: 19; L: 8; N: 5b.

[354] Huber 1997: 233.

[355] Huber 1997: 234.

humans by Milarepa who also spent much time meditating in the many caves of the area.

gTsang smyon's urge to go to this blessed and holy place was encouraged by several visions and signs of ḍākinīs, exhorting him to go there immediately. Convinced that his parents would never let him go to this isolated spot, he ran away carrying a bag of *tsam pa*. He never managed to reach his eagerly longed-for destination, however, but was caught by his mother in Man lung.[356]

Back home in mKhar kha, gTsang smyon continued to study and practise with great diligence. rGod tshang ras pa describes how the young monk learned and understood both the Concise (*bsDus pa*) and the Eight-Thousand-line versions of the Perfection of Wisdom scriptures after just reading them through once.[357] gTsang smyon also studied the most extensive, Hundred-Thousand-line version, of Prajñāpāramitā (*'Bum*). Every single day he learned eighty pages of the text by heart, and at night in his sleep, he thoroughly understood the meaning of what he had memorized the previous day. This extraordinary way of learning came about because of gTsang smyon's propensities from former lives (*bag chags*); he did not need to learn anything new, but just rediscovered the knowledge he already had.[358]

gTsang smyon's skill in the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures soon came to the attention of other people. When gTsang smyon and eight other monks were invited to perform ceremonies (*bla mchod*) by a family in the lower part of mKhar kha[359] their host noticed that gTsang smyon read the Hundred-Thousand-line Prajñāpāramitā with his eyes closed. This made him suspicious, and thinking that the young monk was a fraud, he asked him how he could read with closed eyes. gTsang smyon answered that as long as the correct words come out it does not matter if one reads with open or closed eyes. Since his host suspected that gTsang smyon was only pretending to read, gTsang smyon invited him to check. gTsang smyon covered his eyes so that he could not see the text and read by heart while the others checked in the text whether he read correctly or not. Not only did gTsang smyon read with perfect accuracy, but he was also able to read very fast. After the test, people became convinced that the young monk was genuine, and faith arose in them. Subsequently gTsang smyon became famous as a monk who knew the Hundred-Thousand-line Prajñāpāramitā by heart.[360]

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[356] G: 19; N: 6a. Mar lung according to L: 9. Tucci mentions a monastery of Man lung in a valley of the same name to the east of sTag rtse (Tucci 1989 a: 68). Another possibility is that the name refers to sMan lung (Medicine Valley) mentioned in Milarepa's *Life* and *Songs*. Since the latter place is far away from mKhar kha I find the earlier possibility more plausible.
[357] *brGyad stong pa*, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*. G: 19.
[358] G: 19.
[359] mKhar kha zhol. A local informant told me that this place is now known as rGyal smad grong rtse or Zla zhol.
[360] G: 19.

The adolescent gTsang smyon was also very skilled in other sūtras and rituals. gTsang smyon mastered such Mahāyāna sūtras as *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish*[361] and *The Vajra Cutter Sūtra*,[362] and he was able to perform rituals such as Medicine Buddha[363] and Kun rig,[364] if someone became sick or died.[365]

It is interesting that rGod tshang ras pa and the other authors describe gTsang smyon as a monk with flawless discipline and perfect knowledge of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The trickster-like qualities and outrageous acts that later became his trademark are nowhere to be seen. Just a few dreams and visions indicate the young monk's future as a mad yogin. It should, however, be noticed that none of gTsang smyon hagiographers state that he became a fully ordained monk (*dge slong, bhikṣu*). rGod tshang ras pa states that he became a novice monk (*dge tshul, śrāmaṇera*) and dNgos grub dpal 'bar that he became a monk (*rab tu byung ba*).[366] According to Lha btsun, gTsang smyon only received the lay vows (*dge bsnyen, ūpasaka*), but he later also uses the more general term for becoming a monk—*rab tu byung ba*.[367] This is of course not surprising at this point of the narrative, since novice ordination is the first step for a monk, and since it is not customary to bestow full ordination on young boys. It is not until the novice reaches the age of about twenty that full ordination is to be taken. What is noteworthy is that gTsang smyon never took this next step, but instead became a wandering yogin. Since it is generally considered to be necessary and important for a Buddhist master in Tibet and elsewhere to become fully ordained, it is relevant that none of the three authors state that gTsang smyon ever became a fully ordained monk. The Sixth Dalai Lama, Tshang dbyangs rgya mtsho (1683–1706), is another example of a famous Tibetan master who chose not to become fully ordained. This controversial incarnation of the Dalai Lama eventually also gave up his status as a novice monk and became a layman, an act that seems to have shocked many Tibetans.[368] Perhaps it was gTsang smyon's root lama who inspired him not to take full ordination, which would be a more natural step for a young and gifted novice. As we will see, his root lama, whom he had not yet met, was a tantric yogin with a consort.

However, despite the fact that gTsang smyon was not fully ordained, the hagiographers emphasize that he struggled to keep his novice vows com-

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361 *mDo mdzangs blun*, **Damamūkanāmasūtra*.

362 *The Diamond Sūtra, rDo rje gcod pa, Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitā*.

363 sMan lha, Bhaiṣajyaguru.

364 Kun rig means "All Knowing" (Sarvajñā) and it is one of the names of Vairocana. According to *Nitartha Online Tibetan English Dictionary* Kun rig is an abbreviation of Kun rig rnam par snang mdzad, Sarvavid-Vairocana an Ādi-buddha popular in Sa skya tradition and connected with rites performed for the deceased.

365 G: 19.

366 G: 17; N: 5b.

367 L: 8. Also Thu'u bkwan uses the term *rab tu byung ba* in his short *rnam thar* (T: 38).

368 See, for example, Dhondup 1981: 16.

pletely pure. The *rnam thars* thereby outline how Vajrayāna Buddhism ideally should be practised, and rGod tshang ras pa's *rnam thar* even bears the title: *Heart of the Sun which Clarifies Vajrayāna.*[369] According to Tibetan exegetes, Vajrayāna is the third and highest of the three vehicles (*yāna*) of Buddhism and it is often stated that only those who have practised and achieved a thorough realization of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna are able, and allowed, to practise Vajrayāna/Tantra.[370] Another way of including the Vajrayāna/Tantra within the general Buddhist context is to see it as one of two paths of Mahāyāna Buddhism. According to this way of seeing it, Mahāyāna consists of a sūtric and a tantric path.[371] Regardless of how Vajrayāna is incorporated within the Buddhist teachings, Tibetan Buddhists see Tantra as an advanced and secret path that must be combined with, and preceded by, Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. This point is made clear by the way gTsang smyon practised; first he received the *prātimokṣa* vows and renounced samsara, this is, the basis of Hīnayāna. Then his practice was based upon the dyad of wisdom (*prajñā*) and compassion (*karuṇa*), two main concepts of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Only after having studied and understood both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, did he start with advanced tantric practice.

Thus gTsang smyon had entered and realized the core teachings of both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, the basis for Vajrayāna practice, when still in his early teens. In the words of rGod tshang ras pa he had "became like the moon among other monks, who were like stars."[372] Now the time was ripe for the young monk to enter into "the supreme mantra vehicle" as the Vajrayāna is sometimes called, which leads us to the next section, where gTsang smyon's meeting with his root-lama will be described.

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[369] *rDo rje theg pa'i gsal byed nyi ma'i snying po.*

[370] I am aware of the fact that Hīnayāna is a polemic term coined by the Mahāyāna followers. Both these terms are problematic, but since they are widely used, both among Buddhists and academics, and since there have not yet appeared any good alternatives I use them. For a description of how the three vows of the three vehicles are combined according to a master contemporary with gTsang smyon (mNga' ris Paṇ chen Padma dbang rgyal, 1487–1542), see Dudjom 1996. For an example of how the three vehicles are understood by contemporary Tibetan Buddhists who base their explications upon Chögyam Trungpa's teachings, see Nālandā Translation Committee 1989: 295–298. Tantric Buddhism (Vajrayāna) and tantric Buddhist practice will be presented in more detail in Chapter 8.

[371] See, for example, lCe sgom, translated in Bentor 2001: 326.

[372] G: 20: *bstan 'dzin rab tu byung ba dkar tshogs lta bu'i nang na / sprul sku mchog nyid bsil zer rgyas pa'i dkyil 'khor lta bur gyur pa.*

The Meeting with the Root-Lama: Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan becomes Chos kyi grags pa—The Fame of Dharma

> I bow down [to you who] met with the Lord, Rab 'byams,[373] an emanation of the Buddha, in the pleasure garden called La bar [in] Dags po [Dwags po]. Seeing [his] face and hearing [his] voice, the profound meaning was instantly revealed and your minds mixed.[374]

After his failed escape to the holy La phyi, gTsang smyon continued to study vigorously in mKhar kha, as before. However, the signs and visions that previously had appeared and encouraged him to leave did not cease. On the contrary, they arose repeatedly, and when fifteen women appeared in a vision and urged him to leave, he could not bear to stay any longer. This time he took nothing at all with him, and he managed to escape without being caught.[375]

His destination was Tsāri, a holy and isolated border area in the southeast frequented by yogins for their meditation practice.[376] Like La phyi, Tsāri is situated far from the power centers of Central Tibet, and both places are connected with the tantric deity Cakrasaṃvara. The fifteen women had explicitly told gTsang smyon to go there,[377] and after four days of rapid travel, gTsang smyon arrived in Lhasa where he met three nuns who also were on a pilgrimage. They decided to join company and departed for Tsāri together. On the way they passed through Dwags po, and in a place called La bar Zur mkhar, or simply Zur mkhar, situated at the northern gate (*byang sgo*) of Tsāri, they met a famous physician named A pho chos rje mNyam nyid rdo rje (short: A pho chos rje, 1439–1475).[378] A pho chos rje asked them where

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[373] gTsang smyon's main lama Sha ra rab 'byams pa (1427–1470).

[374] L: 9: *dags po (dwags po) la bar zhes bya'i bskyed tshal (skyed tshal) du / sangs rgyas rnam sprul rab 'byams rje dang mjal / / zhal mthong gsung thos mos la zab mo'i don / / mngon gyur thugs yid gcig tu 'gres ('dres) la 'dud /.*

[375] G: 20; L: 9; N: 6a. The sources differ as to how long he stayed in mKhar kha between when his mother caught him in Man lung and he finally ran away. According to rGod tshang ras pa, he was eighteen (seventeen according to the Western way of counting, 1469) when he finally left, which would mean that he stayed for several years (G: 20). Lha btsun, on the other hand, says he stayed in mKhar kha only one year after being caught in Man lung, and he also states that the vision, or according to Lha btsun, the dream of the fifteen women, arose when he was fourteen years old. Since he escaped after that incident, he was fourteen at the time of his escape according to Lha btsun (L: 9). dNgos grub dpal 'bar gives no information about it, but simply states that gTsang smyon stayed for a while in mKhar kha before his final, and successful, escape (N: 6a).

[376] For a detailed study of Tsāri, see Huber 1999.

[377] G: 20; L: 9; N: 6a.

[378] According to Smith he was one of the greatest physicians of the Tibetan tradition and the first of the Zur mkhar school (Smith 2001: 286, n. 151). He is also mentioned in Clifford 1994: 59.

they came from and where they were heading. When he heard gTsang smyon's answer, he said:

> "Young monk, do you know how to recite the Buddhist scriptures?" [gTsang smyon] answered that he did.
>
> "In that case, young monk, stay here for a while to recite the Buddhist scriptures, [I will] send off the others [the three nuns] on their pilgrimage." After saying this, he gave each one of them good food and other necessities.[379]

gTsang smyon decided to do as A pho chos rje had suggested. While the nuns continued on their pilgrimage, he stayed behind and recited Buddhist scriptures.

Then, on the tenth day of the month, a *gaṇacakra* was to be held in La bar. For the occasion the master Sha ra rab 'byams pa Sangs rgyas seng ge (Sha ra ba, 1427–1470) was invited from his residence in Lhun grub sman gling.[380] Sha ra ba, a former dGe lugs pa *dge bshes* who had started to follow the bKa' brgyud tradition, was considered to be an emanation of the great Indian siddha Saraha.[381]

When Sha ra ba agreed to participate in the offering feast in La bar at Zur mkhar, the residence of Zur mkhar ba mNyam nyid rdo rje, it was probably a great honor for everyone present. Sha ra ba was in his early forties at the time, and passed away soon after he had guided gTsang smyon, who was in his late teens.[382] In the *Lion of Faith*, it is described how Sha ra ba asked A pho chos rje about the identity of the young monk he heard reciting so beautifully.[383] After having been told the story, he ordered that gTsang smyon should be brought to him.

> By only meeting him and seeing his face, [gTsang smyon's] conceptions changed. Overwhelmed with devotion and respectful love [gTsang smyon] burst into tears, the hair on his body stood on end, and an undefiled bliss overcame him. When the Lord [gTsang smyon] was in this state he experienced that he melted into the incomparable precious one's body [Sha ra ba].

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[379] N: 6a: *btsun chung khyod kyis chos 'don e shes gsung / shes zhus pas / 'o na btsun chung rang 'dir res shig chos 'don zhing sdod / gzhan tsho gnas skor la rdzongs gsung nas 'tsho ba bzang po re gnang ngo /.*

[380] bsKyed tshal lhun grub sman gling in L: 6.

[381] G: 20; L: 9; N: 6a; gTsang smyon 1971 vol 1: 111. According to a life story about Shākya mchog ldan (1428–1507), Sha ra ba was a dGe lugs pa (Ri bo dge ldan pa) *dge bshes* who later became a bKa' brgyud (dKar brgyud) (Kun dga' grol mchog, Jo nang 1975: 70–71). This is also stated by sTag lung Ngag dbang rnam rgyal (1992: 451). Sha ra ba seems to have been an important master who had several famous disciples besides the above-mentioned Zur mkhar ba mNyam nyid rdo rje. For example, the important Karma bKa' brgyud master Karma 'Phrin las (1456–1539) also received teachings from him (Sernesi 2007 a: 115). Sha ra ba's life will be presented briefly in Chapter 9.

[382] The sources differ slightly about gTsang smyon's age. According to Ehrhard, who follows rGod tshang ras pa's text, the meeting occurred in 1469 (Ehrhard 2004 b: 593, n. 6).

[383] N: 6a.

At that time [gTsang smyon] touched [Sha ra ba] and then he fainted and was unconscious for a long time. When he woke up a great realization, like a rain, of the dharmatā, the wisdom of the innate Mahāmudrā, the absolute truth that is beyond the realms of knowledge, thoughts and expression, the natural state free from elaboration, was born. After that time, [gTsang smyon] said that he never experienced any notion of holding his own mind and the lama's mind as different.

Then, in front [of Sha ra ba] was a wooden skull filled with leftover feast liquor (*ma da na*) that [Sha ra ba] gave [to gTsang smyon] who emptied it.[384] The Lord [Sha ra ba] also became very happy and took care of [gTsang smyon]. From that time on, and as long as [gTsang smyon] stayed, he remained as a servant, never separated [from Sha ra ba].[385]

Both the wife of Sha ra ba[386] and Sha ra ba himself experienced prophetic dreams that indicated gTsang smyon's importance as a future accomplished master.[387] To indicate gTsang smyon's future role as a person diffusing the doctrine, Sha ra ba gave gTsang smyon a new name, Chos kyi grags pa (Fame of Dharma).

Tantric Instructions and Practice

gTsang smyon immediately established very close ties with Sha ra ba and stayed as his attendant for nine months. During this time he received many instructions, reading transmissions, and empowerments.[388] Thus, he entered into the Mantra- or Tantra-vehicle, and became a perfect vessel for Sha ra ba's profound instructions.

This is how he received the profound oral instructions: he practised the Four Letter Mahāmudrā [which is connected with] the view, the Six Dharmas of Nāro [which is connected with] the path of method, and the experiential in-

[384] Also sGam po pa was served beer which he drank up when he met Milarepa for the first time. This was seen as an auspicious portent proving that he was a good vessel capable of receiving Milarepa's instructions, and also that he would become the holder of his lineage (Chang (trans.) 1989: 473).

[385] G: 21: *sku drung du mjal zhal mthong ba tsam gyis snang ba 'gyur / mos gus chen po'i dungs shugs kyis spyan chab shor zhing / sku lus kyi ba spu 'dang ba (gzing ba) dang zag med kyi bde bas zhig (bshig) 'gro ba lta bu'i ngang nas thugs nyams la / mnyam med rin po che'i sku la rje nyid thim pa'i snang ba shar tshe / sku la 'jus nas dran med du yun ring bar brgyal / de sangs pa dang phyag rgya chen po lhan cig skyes ba'i ye shes chos nyid don dam pa'i bden pa smra bsam shes brjod kyi yul las 'das pa gnyug ma spros bral chen po'i rtogs pa gcig char du 'khrungs dus de man bla ma dang rang sems tha dad du 'dzin pa'i snang ba 'char ma myong gsung / de nas drung na ma da na gzhes (bshes) 'phro shing gi ka li gang 'dug pa gnang byung ba lhag lus med par gzhes (bshes) / rje yang shin tu mnyes nas bdag gir mdzad cing der nam gzhugs kyi bar la zhabs pyir 'bral med mdzad do /*. Thanks are due to Marta Sernesi for helping me translate the beginning of this passage.

[386] Sha ra ba's wife is called 'Bag snyol (G: 21) or sGrol ma (L: 12).

[387] G: 21; N: 6a.

[388] L: 10; N: 6a.

structions known as the Aural Transmission of Ras chung or the Aural Transmission of Cakrasaṃvara, which are like the source or root of all the profound paths of the precious bKa' brgyud. At that time he also had signs of the path and signs of warmth. When this great being [gTsang smyon] practised just one single day he completed many [practices] that ordinary persons who practise meditation for years do not [complete]. It was comparable to taking back one's birthright. The emanation body (Sha ra ba) was pleased in his heart, and felt that there was an auspicious connection.[389]

Among the teachings Sha ra ba transmitted, the Aural Transmission of the bKa' brgyud school stands out as particularly important.[390] gTsang smyon later spent much time practising and propagating these instructions, and he eventually composed a compilation of the various Aural Transmissions of the bKa' brgyud tradition.[391] Since these instructions were so important for gTsang smyon and his disciples, some clarification and information about them will be given before we continue.

The Aural Transmission

"Aural transmission" or "hearing lineage" (*snyan brgyud*), as the term also could be translated, is a generic term for a type of profound oral instructions dealing with tantric practice. Since *snyan* means ear and together with other words refer to what is heard, the term emphasizes the "aural" rather than "oral" or "spoken" (*bka'*) aspect of the teachings which is transmitted.[392] Another translation that is sometimes used for the term, "whispered lineage", conveys that these instructions were considered very secret. It should also be noted that the transmission is conceived as being "aural" from the very beginning since a human lineage guru "heard" it directly from a dharmakāya wisdom ḍākinī.

It should be noted that there are two different ways of spelling the term in Tibetan, *snyan brgyud* and *snyan rgyud*. While the former spelling could be

[389] N: 6b: *zab mo'i man ngag gsan tshul ni / lta ba phyag rgya chen po yig ge bzhi pa / thabs lam nā ro chos drug / bka' rgyud (brgyud) rin po che'i zab lam mtha' dag gi rtsa ba'am / ma mo lta bur gyur pa / ras chung snyan rgyud dam / bde mchog snyan rgyud du grags pa nyams khrid du mdzad cing / de'i dus na yang lam rtags dang drod rtags gang zag gzhan phal gyis lo du mar bsgoms pas mi yong ba / bdag nyid chen po 'di yis zhag re la'ang du ma zhig rdzogs par mdzad cing / rang gi bcol ba len pa ltar gyur pa na / sprul sku thugs mnyes te rten 'brel yod pa yin /*. Thanks are due to Marta Sernesi who helped me to translate the beginning of this passage.

[390] When referring to the Aural Transmission of the bKa' brgyud tradition I use capital initial letters and when the term is used as a generic term I do not use capital letters.

[391] Only fractions of gTsang smyon's Aural Transmission collection have been found, and it is possible that parts of this work are lost. I will return with a more detailed discussion about gTsang smyon's Aural Transmission collection and its contents in Chapter 9.

[392] The term "bka' brgyud" that nowadays is mainly used for the Buddhist tradition to which gTsang smyon belonged has a somewhat similar meaning, but this term emphasizes the "words" instead of the "hearing" of the words, and could thus be translated as "command lineage" or "oral transmission".

translated as "aural/hearing lineage/transmission", the latter spelling is more accurately translated as "aural/hearing tantra", a translation of the Sanskrit *karṇatantra*. Although several different translated *karṇatantra* texts are found in the Tibetan canon[393] it is possible that the texts are not translations but examples of what Ronald Davidson calls "grey texts".[394] This would mean that they are neither Tibetan nor Indic in origination but the result of collaboration between an Indian/Nepalese/Kashmiri siddha/scholar and a Tibetan.[395] It should moreover be noted that *rgyud* is sometimes a variant spelling of *brgyud*, and if that is the case here, the two terms have an identical meaning and the most probable alternative would be "aural transmission".[396]

It is important to be aware of the fact that there are many different aural transmissions and that several of them have nothing to do with the Aural Transmission of the bKa' brgyud school. Cyrus Stearns gives an apt description of the aural transmissions in his study of the early masters of the Path with the Result (*lam 'bras*) tradition in Tibet, and it is striking how similar the aural transmissions of the Sa skya and the bKa' brgyud schools seem to be.

> In contrast to the voluminous exegetical literature surrounding the tantric scriptures themselves, the major systems of esoteric practice entered Tibet primarily by means of secret oral transmissions (*snyan brgyud*). Although these systems were essentially oral in nature, in most cases there were also at least a few written texts from India, the most fundamental of which were often referred to by the term *rdo rje tshig rkang*, "vajra verses."[397]

As Stearns makes clear, the core teachings of the aural tantra/transmission are the "vajra verses", or "adamantine verses" as I have translated it. In the bKa' brgyud tradition this core text is believed to contain the Adamantine Verses (*rdo rje'i tshig rkang*) that Vajradhara uttered to Jñānaḍākinī (Ye shes mkha' 'gro).[398] Tilopa later received them directly from the ḍākinīs and then wrote a short text related to the Adamantine Verses titled *The Small Authoritative Scripture*.[399] Several different names are used for these instructions in the bKa' brgyud school, for example: "Aural Transmission of

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[393] For a list of the *karṇatantra* texts found in the Tibetan canon, see Torricelli 1998: 386.
[394] Davidson 2005: 148–151.
[395] Davidson 2005: 149.
[396] Roberts is of another opinion, however, and states that a number of Tibetan authors explicitly retain the spelling *rgyud* to mean tantra (Roberts 2007: 1).
[397] Stearns 2001: 8.
[398] Torricelli has translated a synopsis of the outline of the Adamantine Verses (Toricelli 1998: 388–412.
[399] *gZhung chung*. For more information about these texts and where to find them, see Torricelli 1998: 386.

Saṃvara",[400] "Aural Transmission of the Ḍākinīs"[401] and "Aural Transmission of Saṃvara [and] the Ḍākinīs".[402]

Marpa describes how Tilopa received these transmissions directly from a dharmakāya wisdom ḍākinī in Uḍḍiyāṇa, the land of ḍākinīs.[403] After that, while on his way back, Tilopa also received "Nine Teachings of the Formless Ḍākinī".[404] These important instructions were imparted to him by a ḍākinī in a song, and together with the Adamantine Verses they constitute the most central instructions of the Aural Transmission lineage.[405] Tilopa later passed these instructions on to Nāropa who in turn transmitted the Aural Transmissions to Marpa during his third and last visit to India.

Marpa later praised the Aural Transmission (Hearing Lineage) in the following way:

> Although everyone has a lineage,
> If one has the ḍākinī hearing lineage, that is it.
> Although everyone has forefathers,
> If one has Tilopa, that is it.
> Although everyone has a guru,
> If one has Nāropa, that is it.
> Although everyone has oral instructions,
> If one has the hearing lineage, that is it.
> Although everyone attains enlightenment by meditating,
> If one becomes enlightened without effort in meditation,
> that is it.[406]

Marpa also pointed out that the Aural Transmission was a special teaching that no one else possessed, and he called it a "wish-fulfilling jewel".[407]

In Tibet, Marpa transmitted these instructions to his main disciple and spiritual heir, Milarepa, who later, encouraged by a vision of Vajrayoginī, wrote them down.[408] Then Milarepa gave this profound transmission to three

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400 *bDe mchog snyan brgyud.*

401 *mKa' 'gro snyan brgyud.*

402 *bDe mchog kha' 'gro snyan brgyud.*

403 Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros (ascr.) 1995: 35–45.

404 *Lus med mkha' 'gro'i chos skor dgu.*

405 The nine teachings are presented in Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros 1995: 44; see also Nālandā Translation Committee 1986: 176. The Nine Teachings of the Formless Ḍākinī are, however, sometimes described as a separate transmission, and they are, as we will see, not counted as a "one-to-one transmission" (*gcig brgyud*).

406 Nālandā Translation Committee 1986: 195; gTsang smyon Heruka 1990: 180–181: *brgyud pa kun la yod mod kyi / mkha' 'gro yod na yod pa yin / mes po kun la yod mod kyi / ti lo yod na yod pa yin/ bla ma kyn la yod mod kyi / nāro yod na yod pa yin / gdams ngag kun la yod mod kyi / snyan brgyud yod na yod pa yin / bsgoms te sangs rgyas kun la yod / ma bsgoms rgya na rgya ba yin /.*

407 Nālandā Translation Committee 1986: 196. It should be kept in mind that it was gTsang smyon who compiled this life story, and it is therefore hard to determine whether it really is Marpa who is speaking here.

408 G: 159. According to rGod tshang ras pa, Milarepa relied on the Adamantine Verses (*rDo rje'i tshig rkang*)—and also on Indian and Tibetan commentaries when he wrote them down.

of his foremost disciples, Ras chung pa (1084–1161), Ngan rdzong ston pa (b. late eleventh century) and Dwags po rin po che (sGam po pa, 1079–1153).[409] Each of them composed manuals (*yig cha*) of the instructions that they had received, and thus three different transmissions of the Aural Transmissions of the bKa' brgyud tradition arose, called respectively "the Aural Transmission of Ras chung pa", "the Aural Transmission of Ngan rdzong pa" and "the Aural Transmission of Dwags po".[410] These three bKa' brgyud transmissions are sometimes called the "Aural Transmission Trilogy".[411] Milarepa did not receive the complete instructions of the Aural Transmission, however, but he only received four of the above-mentioned Nine Teachings of the Formless Ḍākinī from Marpa. He therefore told his disciple Ras chung pa to go to India and request the remaining five teachings from a holder of Nāropa's lineage. Ras chung pa went to India and received the teachings from the Indian master Tiphupa and brought them back to Tibet.[412]

The Aural Transmission of the bKa' brgyud tradition is said to have been a "one-to-one transmission" (*gcig brgyud*).[413] The exact meaning of *gcig brgyud* in this context is somewhat unclear, but it seems to imply that some parts of these instructions were only allowed to be passed on to one disciple at a time for a certain period before being disseminated more widely. When Nāropa gave Marpa these instructions he said, "It should be a teaching restricted to a single lineage holder for thirteen generations."[414] Despite Nāropa's "command seal" (*bka' brgya*) the Aural Transmission divided, as was seen above, into three different streams just a few generations later. Nevertheless, some parts of the instructions were perhaps only given to a single lineage holder. The command seal from Vajradhara that had restricted the dissemination of these instructions had expired when gTsang smyon

[409] For a life story of sGam po pa in English, see Jampa Mackenzie 1995. For a Ph.D. dissertation about sGam po pa's life and teachings, see Trungram 2004.

[410] G: 159.

[411] *sNyan brgyud skor gsum.*

[412] Chang (trans.) 1989: 397–401; Lhalungpa (trans.) 1979: 92. Tiphupa has an interesting background: his consciousness is considered to be identical with that of Marpa's son Dar ma mdo sde. Dar ma mdo sde died at a young age and by means a particular type of tansference practice (*'pho ba*) called *grong 'jug* he transmitted his consciousness to a pigeon and then from the pigeon to a dead brahmin boy who thus was brought back to life and became known as Tiphupa—"The pigeon man". For the whole story, see Nālandā Translation Committee 1986: 171–176.

[413] The above-mentioned Nine Instructions of the Formless Ḍākinī were not counted as a one-to-one transmission (Lhalungpa (trans.) 1979: 92).

[414] Nālandā Translation Committee 1986: 90. rGod tshang ras pa also points out that the Aural Transmission was a one-to-one transmission lineage that was supposed to be given only to one disciple for thirteen generations (G: 159). This view is not unique to gTsang smyon and his disciples, but also the root-text of the Aural Transmission and the hagiographies of other bKa' brgyud traditions emphasize the one-to-one nature of the Aural Transmission. For more information about the one-to-one transmission, see Martin 2005: 67; Sernesi 2004: 253–258; Stearns 2001: 10–11.

received them and he therefore decided to make a collection of them and teach them to his disciples.[415]

The practices of the Aural Transmission tradition are generally meant to be performed in isolated retreats by serious yogins. Unlike most other Buddhist traditions in Tibet, the Aural Transmission tradition of which gTsang smyon was a lineage holder was thus not dependent upon monks and monasteries for its maintenance and dissemination. Dan Martin notes that it was "esoteric in the sense that it existed independently of the public arenas of Buddhist teaching and could freely pass inside monastery walls and out again."[416] Martin moreover states that "Its existence outside the institutions, as well as its deliberate fostering of 'individual' spirituality, made it rather suspect in the eyes of some of the more scholastic leaders."[417] The esoteric and non-institutional character of the aural transmission lineages contributed to their eventual obscurity and in many cases their disappearance. There are many examples that show that it is difficult to maintain transmission lineages without strong monastic and institutional support, and the Aural Transmission lineage of the bKa' brgyud could be seen as an example of this.[418]

Instructions and Practice

Besides the Aural Transmission, gTsang smyon received several other teachings from Sha ra ba many but not all of which were related to the Aural Transmission. Again, rGod tshang ras pa gives the most detailed account. He mentions that gTsang smyon obtained the reading transmissions (*lung*) of *The Mountain Dharma Trilogy*,[419] *The Three Freedom Vehicles*,[420] the Fivefold Mahāmudrā,[421] the Six Dharmas of Nāropa[422] according to the traditions of Karmapa, Yang dgon pa (1213–1258), Urgyan pa (U rgyan rin chen dpal, 1230–1309) and 'Ba' ra ba (1310–1391), *The Innate Union*,[423] *The Dohā Trilogy*,[424] *The Six Dohā Treasures*,[425] *The Laughing Bell of Equal Taste*[426]

[415] G: 159. More information about gTsang smyon's Aural Transmission compilation will be given in Chapter 9.
[416] Martin 2005: 66.
[417] Martin 2005: 66. According to Martin, the independence of monastic institutions resulted in it being less problematic to include both laypersons and women as bearers of the blessings of the lineage (Martin 2005: 66).
[418] The Aural Transmissions of the bKa' brgyud have mainly survived in the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud tradition, and the yogic and non-institutional lineages that gTsang smyon represented have more or less disappeared.
[419] *Ri chos skor gsum.*
[420] *Thar gru skor gsum.*
[421] *Phyag rgya chen po lnga ldan.*
[422] *Nāro chos drug.*
[423] *Lhan cig skyes sbyor.*
[424] *Dohā skor gsum.*
[425] *Dohā mdzod drug.*
[426] *Ro snyoms bgad dril* (= *Ro snyom skor drug*?).

and *Distinguishing the Adamantine Verses*.[427] rGod tshang ras pa also mentions that gTsang smyon received the Innate Goddess[428] empowerment and was given the name Mi bskyod rdo rje.[429]

After having received these reading transmissions and the empowerment, Sha ra ba began to instruct and guide gTsang smyon in a more direct, detailed, and personal way. During this period, gTsang smyon practised what he had been taught and then received more instructions. This resulted in many important insights and profound experiences. The teachings that formed the basis of the instructions that he received were the above-mentioned three teachings, or rather set of teachings: the Four Letter Mahāmudrā;[430] the Six Dharmas of Nāro; and the Aural Transmissions. It is important to be aware of the fact that these three groups of teachings are interrelated in several ways. A Four Letter Mahāmudrā text is found in the Aural Transmission collection that gTsang smyon later compiled,[431] and the Six Dharmas of Nāropa are an important part of the Aural Transmission, for example.[432] This means that the Four Letter Mahāmudrā and the Six Dharmas of Nāropa—inner heat, illusory body, dream, luminosity, transference and intermediate state—are included in the Aural Transmission, but they are also transmitted separately.[433] Their close relationship is seen in the life story of Nāropa by Lha btsun where each one of the Six Dharmas is followed by instructions taken from the Aural Transmission.[434]

Sometimes the Six Dharmas are explained as being "the path of method" (*thabs lam*) and Mahāmudrā as being "the path of liberation" (*grol lam*). In "the path of method" the practitioner relies on specific techniques such as visualizations and yogic exercises in order to realize the nature of the mind (*sems kyi gnas lugs*) while in "the path of liberation" the practitioner directly

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427 *rDo rje tshig 'byed.*

428 *Lhan cig skyes ma.*

429 G: 22.

430 This is a rather unknown Great Seal teaching. For some more information about it, see Sernesi 2007 a: 197–198; Martin 1984: 91–92. 'Jam dbyang mkhyen rtse dbang po composed a text about the Four Letter Mahāmudrā which is included in *Dam ngag mdzod*, and listed under 'Jam dbyang mkhyen rtse dbang po 1979–1981 in the Bibliography. Also Lha btsun composed texts about the Four Letter Mahāmudrā. Two such texts are available in NGMPP's archives, see Bibliography for details.

431 gTsang smyon Heruka 1971. It is possible that gTsang smyon included this text in the collection because he valued the text. This is also the opinion of Sernesi (2007 a: 197).

432 See, for instance, Torricelli 1998, rGod tshang ras pa sNa tshogs rang grol 1974 and gTsang smyon Heruka 1971.

433 For more information about these practices, see Chapter 8. It should be noted that the "entering of corpses" transference (*grong 'jug*) is counted as one of the Six Dharmas in the Aural Transmission while *bar do* is transmitted separately from the Six Dharmas in the Aural Transmission. See, for example, Sernesi 2007 a: 175, and especially p. 188; Toricelli 1998: 389, 400.

434 For a translation with commentaries of this text, see Guenther 1986. Since this *rnam thar* was written by Lha btsun, who was a direct disciple of gTsang smyon, we gain much insight into the system of practice of gTsang smyon from the text.

dwells in that nature without applying such techniques. The Great Seal (*Phyag chen*, *Mahāmudrā*) and Great Completion (*rDzogs chen*, *Atiyoga*) are the most common terms used for the latter category of practices. This division should not be seen as absolute, however, since the two—*thabs lam* and *grol lam*—are closely related and interdependent. These different teachings are thus best understood as related parts of one system of practice. It should also be held in mind that both the Aural Transmission and the Six Dharmas are intimately connected with the *yidam*-practices of the higher tantras (*anuttarayogatantra*); and that they are particularly related with the two main *yidams* of the bKa' brgyud tradition, Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī.[435] All of these teachings are highly esteemed within the bKa' brgyud tradition and constitute the most characteristic and important parts of the lineage.[436]

It should also be remembered that the Six Dharmas, Mahāmudrā and the Aural Transmissions are considered very profound and secret. They were therefore given to advanced practitioners who had undergone previous training and/or were considered particularly gifted. Nowadays the teachings are mainly given to people who spend longer periods in seclusion for intensive meditation practice, and that was probably also the case when gTsang smyon lived.

The first of these instructions that gTsang smyon received was thc "naked" (*dmar khrid*) "pointing-out instructions" (*ngo sprod*) of the Four Letter Mahāmudrā. rGod tshang ras pa mentions that these instructions resulted in great progress in his post-meditation practice (*rjes thob*). The practice of the Four Letter Mahāmudrā also enabled gTsang smyon to continuously dwell in the so-called state of luminosity (*'od gsal*) at night.[437]

Then, Sha ra ba instructed his young gifted disciple in the Six Dharmas of Nāropa. rGod tshang ras pa mentions that Sha ra ba used a particular instruction with notes by Milarepa when he gave these instructions.[438] As a result, after having practised for fifteen days, gTsang smyon dreamt of Sha ra ba's consort.[439] When gTsang smyon woke up his sexual organ had sunk into his body and did not appear again until eight days later. After this gTsang smyon's male organ mostly remained inside his body, enclosed in a

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[435] For a study of Vajravārāhī/Vajrayoginī, see English 2002.

[436] Tantric practice will be descibed in more detail in Chapter 8.

[437] G: 22.

[438] G: 22: *chos drug gi khrid yig rje mi las zin bris*. This probably refers to the main Aural Transmission text of the Six Dharmas titled *rDzogs rim steng sgo rnam par grol ba'i chos drug gi khrid yig* which is attributed to Milarepa and called *zin bris* in its colophon (Sernesi 2007 a: 158, 190).

[439] G: 22; L: 12; T: 40–41. This incident is not mentioned by dNgos grub dpal 'bar but the fact that Thu'u bkwan included it in his short synopsis of *Heart of the Sun*, means that he considered it important.

sheath.[440] gTsang smyon then mastered the practice of *gtum mo* ("inner heat") enabling him to dress only in cotton (*ras rkyang*).[441] He thus joined the noble company of Milarepa (Mi la ras pa), Ras chung pa, Ling ras pa and other famous cotton-clad yogins—*ras pas*—who could keep their bodies warm dressed only in cotton (*ras*) in the cold Tibetan climate.

rGod tshang ras pa then gives a rather detailed description of how gTsang smyon's yogic practices made the knots of his "channels" disappear. The "subtle energy" or "wind" of the right- and left-hand channels merged into the central channel and his mind unified with the "wind" and with the "drops".[442] This resulted in the appearance of visions (*gzigs snang*) and signs (*rtags snang*). As a result of the practice, gTsang smyon also gained the ability to go to different buddha-fields in his dreams, and he became able to perform miracles.[443] At the time of practising the "illusory body" gTsang smyon realized that all appearances are *dharmatā* and resemble a reflection in a mirror. gTsang smyon then lost all interest in the so-called "eight worldly concerns" and henceforth never cared about whether he was praised or blamed, or if he gained or lost. Similarly, he did not care about fame or obscurity, happiness or suffering.[444] The complete abandonment of the eight worldly concerns—around which an ordinary person's whole life is usually centered—showed that gTsang smyon was akin to Milarepa and the small number of other figures that are believed to have relinguished them.

The Young Monk Seems to be Mad

It was around this time that gTsang smyon first appeared to be mad in the eyes of other people.[445] The cause of this was gTsang smyon's many late arrivals to his lama's lessons. When asked about his whereabouts gTsang smyon said that he had been to various pure lands, such as U rgyan, or that he had attended ritual feasts (*gaṇacakra*) in charnel grounds. Some of Sha ra ba's disciples held him to be a fraud, while others thought he had gone mad when they heard his answers.[446] The reason for his unusual behavior was not ordinary madness, however, but was rather a sign of his mastery of the yogic practices and of his disinterest in worldly affairs.

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[440] This is one of the thirty-two major marks of a Great Man (Mahāpuruṣa). These marks are the physical signs of the perfection of a buddha. For an enumeration of all the thirty-two marks, see, for instance, Strong 2001: 41–43 or *Mahāvastu Avdāna, vol 1* 1970: 177 f. (Sanskrit), *The Mahāvastu* 1973: 180–182 (English).
[441] G: 22.
[442] For more information about these practices, see Chapter 8.
[443] G: 23.
[444] G: 23.
[445] This has also been emphasized by Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 23.
[446] G: 24.

Then, when [Sha ra ba] gave the naked oral instructions of Nāropa's secret conduct, [gTsang smyon] listened to the teachings during the days, and at night he roved around whatever rugged places that existed and practised the secret conduct. Most of the non-humans offered their life-heart (*srog snying*) and were bound by sacred promises [to gTsang smyon]. In particular, by performing *gcod* beneath a solitary tree great progress came about. Also during the day he solely performed the equalization of taste (*ro snyoms*) and trampled (*thog rdzis*) on all good and bad circumstances.[447]

Despite the seemingly strange behavior that gTsang smyon started to display at this time, the full-fledged mad yogin (*rnal 'byor smyon pa*) had not yet been born. In fact, his eccentric ways were only a mild premonition of the much more extreme behavior to come, and the sobriquet "madman" (*smyon pa*) or "Madman of gTsang" (*gTsang pa smyon pa*) had not yet been given him. Instead, as seen above, Sha ra ba called him "Fame of Dharma" (Chos kyi grags pa) and we must remember that he still was a young monk with much more to learn before fully embarking on the path of a wandering mad yogin.

Sha ra ba's Final Instructions

The next important step in gTsang smyon's spiritual career was to receive the empowerments of the Aural Transmission. By means of sand maṇḍalas Sha ra ba granted the Four Empowerments of Cakrasaṃvara: with sixty-two deities, thirteen deities, five deities, and of the Innate Father alone. Then, by means of *sindūra* maṇḍalas he performed the empowerment of the consort (*yum*) Vajravārāhī with fifteen deities, seven deities, five deities, and with the Innate Mother alone. Finally, by means of the lama's body, speech and mind, Sha ra ba gave gTsang smyon the profound sign empowerment (*zab mo brda'i dbang*).[448]

Then gTsang smyon received reading transmissions (*lung*) of many different versions of the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*s.

In particular, [Sha ra ba] gave [gTsang smyon] the entire and completely perfect scriptural transmissions and instructions, together with the auxiliary teachings [of the aural transmissions], such as the Aural Transmission of Saṃvara, the Aural Transmission of Ras chung, the Aural Transmission of Ngan rdzong, and the Aural Transmission of Dags po. These are the essence of all the tantras and sūtras and the [actual] words of the ḍākinīs, like a heart

[447] G: 24: *de nas dpal na ro pa'i gsang spyod bka' ma dmar khrid du gnang tshe nyin mo gsung chos gsan mtshan mo snyan sa gang 'dug 'grim zhing gsang spyod skyangs pas / mi ma yin phal che bas srog snying phul zhing dam la thogs / khyad par shing sdong rkang cig gcig yod pa'i 'od du gcod mdzad pas bogs shin du che ba byung zhing / de nas nyin mo yang rkyen bzang ngan thams cad la thog rdzis dang ro snyoms kho na byas gsung /.*

[448] G: 24. Nāropa gave the same empowerment to Marpa according to the *rnam thar* of Marpa, see Nālandā Translation Committee 1986: 90.

or root of all the profound teachings of the precious bKa' rgyud—names and lineages that are famous as authentic, the precious Wish-fulfilling Jewel that is even more profound than all the most profound. [These instructions Sha ra ba gave] according to his own practices and tradition; the uncommon, extra secret and highest lineage of the special teachings. [The teachings that gTsang smyon] received in that way stayed in his heart; it was like taking back one's birthright, and the meaning of all the words entered into his mind. A complete experience and realization was born. [gTsang smyon] became the holder (*bdag po*) of the special transmission of blessings and of all the realizations and teachings [of Sha ra ba's lineage].[449]

Sha ra ba's main disciple at the time was the Lord of Dharma, Dwags po Sangs bsam pa and everyone prostrated to him. gTsang smyon asked his lama if he should prostrate to him as well. Sha ra ba answered that he should not, and thereby indicated that gTsang smyon would become his future successor.[450]

Then when gTsang smyon had removed his doubts by means of Sha ra ba's instructions, he felt a strong faith in Hayagrīva and asked for Sha ra ba's permission to take Hayagrīva as his *yidam*. Sha ra ba answered:

Son, Fame of Dharma from gTsang, your meditation deity (*yi dam*) is glorious Hevajra; keep him as your meditation deity. Perfect your studies of the tantras such as the *Hevajra Tantra*.[451] In the future, it will have a great purpose. Regard my life story and activities and do not cast a backward glance at this life. Hold a modest position. Wear rags for clothes. Give up these three things: food, clothes, and fame. Be a child of the mountains; wear the mists as your clothes. Through disciplined conduct, carry the objects of perception onto the path. Trample on that which is dreaded (*nyams nga la thog rdzis gyis*)! Give up the eight worldly concerns and set the victory banner of practice in the great holy bKa' brgyud sites such as rTsa ri (Tsāri) rtsa gong, La phyi, Chu bar, Gangs Ti se, and the Six Forts. Set the fortunate disciples who serve the teaching on the path to liberation![452]

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449 G: 24–25: *khyad par mdo rgyud thams cad kyi snying po mkha' 'gro'i gsang tshig / bka' rgyud (brgyud) rin po che'i zab chos thams cad kyi rtsa ba'am snying po lta bu / bde mchog snyan rgyud mkha' 'gro snyan rgyud / ras chung snyan rgyud ngan rdzong snyan rgyud / dags po (dwags po) snyan rgyud sogs mtshan dang rgyud tshul du mar grags pa'i yid bzhin gyi nor bu rin po che zab pa las kyang ches shin du zab pa kun dang thun mong ma yin pa yang gsang bla na med pa'i khyad chos rgyud pa rang rang gi lugs dang phyag len cha lag dang bcas pa yong su rdzogs shing ma lus par lung khrid du gnag zhing / gnang ba ltar thugs snyam su gzhes pas btsol ba len pa'i tshul du tshig don ma lus pa thug su tshud ste / nyams dang rtogs pa mthar phyin pa 'khrungs nas byin rlabs kyi bka' babs zhing lung rtogs ma lus pa'i bdag por gyur to /*. This section is also translated in Sernesi 2007 a: 118.

450 G: 25; N: 6b.

451 *brTag gnyis* (*The Two Segments*), This is a common abbreviation of *dGyes pa rdo rje rtsa ba'i rgyud brtag pa gnyis pa* (*The Two Segments of the Hevajra Root Tantra*, *Hevajratantrarājanāma*) and refers to the two extant parts of the Hevajra root tantra, translated in Snellgrove 1959.

452 G: 25–26: *bu gtsang pa chos kyi grags pa khyod kyi yid dam dpal dges (kye or dgyes) pa rdo rje yin pas yid dam (yi dam) yang gyis / rtag (brtag) gnyis sogs rgyud sde'i slob gnyer mthar phyin par gyis ma 'ongs pa na dgos pa chen po yong / nga'i rnam thar dang spyod pa*

As will be seen, gTsang smyon devoted the rest of his life to following these instructions. After having been given further profound instructions his lama told him to return to his homeland and study.[453] Thus, the time for departure had arrived, but before going, gTsang smyon was appointed dharma regent and master of the teachings, and everyone rejoiced.[454] Then, shedding many tears, and with an almost unbearable grief gTsang smyon left for Tsāri, the original destination of his trip.[455]

Tsāri

> I bow down to you, who, while [dwelling] in the palace of Tsāri—the great holy place of Secret Mantra—obtained accomplishment and then perceived all fine and coarse appearances as the play of dharmatā, and saw all beings as peaceful and wrathful deities.[456]

This verse by Lha btsun concisely summarizes what happened when gTsang smyon reached Tsāri.[457] During the months he spent there, he experienced a complete transformation of the way in which he perceived things.[458] He thus accomplished the important stage of tantric practice when all sounds are perceived as the mantra of the *yidam*, all appearances as the forms of the *yidam* and all thoughts as wisdom.[459] This ability to see things in a completely different way than ordinary people is called *dag snang* in Tibetan. According to Tibetan exegetes, *dag snang* means "pure appearance" and should not be understood as some kind of unrealistic and strange way of forcing oneself to see and hear things as something other than what they are, but rather as seeing them as they actually are. Chögyam Trungpa translates

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la ltos la tshe 'di la phyi mig ma lta sman pa'i sa zung (bzung) / lhrul (hrul) po'i gos gyon / gyong lto gos gtam gsum la thong / ri yi bu gyis na bun gos su gyon / gtul (brtul) zhugs kyi spyod pas yul snang lam du khyer nyams nga la thog rdzis gyis / 'jig rten chos brgyad blos thong la rtsa ri (tsāri) rtsa gong / la phyi chu bar gangs ti se dang rdzong drug sogs bka' rgyud (brgyud) kyi gnas chen rnams su bsgrub pa'i rgyal mtshan tshugs la bstan pa'i zhabs rtog skal ldan kyi gdul bya rnams smin grol la mkhod (khod) chig gsung /. The translation is based upon Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 24. Similar passages are found in L: 13; N: 6b; T: 41–42; and in the *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 4a.

[453] N: 6b.

[454] G: 26; L: 13.

[455] G: 26; N: 7a.

[456] L: 13: *gsang sngag gnas chen tsā ri'i gzhal yas su / / skye 'gro sems can zhi'khro'i lha ru gzigs / / dngos grub brnyes nas phra rags snang ba kun chos nyid rol par shar ba khyod la 'dud /.*

[457] gTsang smyon's time in Tsāri after parting from Sha ra ba is rendered in G: 26; L: 13–15; N 7a.

[458] rGod tshang ras pa and dNgos grub dpal 'bar do not mention how long he stayed, but according to Lha btsun he stayed for about two and a half months (L: 14–15).

[459] For a description of how this idea is utilized in the sPyan ras gzigs meditation practice, see Bokar Rinpoche (1991: 75, 84).

the term as "sacred outlook" and uses it to describe the inseparability, or co-emergence, of samsara and nirvana: "confusion is seen so clearly that this clarity itself is sacred outlook."[460] As seen above, this transformation of perception had already started when gTsang smyon received teachings from his lama, but seems to have come to fruition in Tsāri. While gTsang smyon was staying near the Turquoise Lake in Tsāri, Cakrasaṃvara—the *yidam* deity associated with this holy place—appeared in front of him. This was another powerful indication of gTsang smyon's accomplishments.[461] gTsang smyon felt strongly for Tsāri and wanted to stay there, but according to the *rnam thar*s, he remembered the command of his lama and left.[462] Sha ra ba had told him to return to his country of birth and study the tantras, and this is what he did.[463]

Tantric Studies in dPal 'khor chos sde Monastery

Back in mKhar kha, gTsang smyon met his mother and spent five months in seclusion.[464] While gTsang smyon was in retreat, his mother dreamed about five beautifully adorned ladies. They told her that her son must be sent away to study the tantras and learn how to practise Secret Mantra.[465] Since the prophetic dream was in accordance with Sha ra ba's final instructions to gTsang smyon—"Perfect your studies of the tantras such as the *Hevajra Tantra*; in the future, it will have a great purpose!"—it was decided that the time for tantric studies had arrived.[466] The young monk was sent to the famous dPal 'khor chos sde or dPal 'khor (lo) lde chen monastic complex in rGyal rtse (Gyantse) where he entered the Gur pa monastic department.

rGyal rtse used to be one of the largest and most important towns in Tibet, centrally located in the middle of the gTsang province. Roads from gZhis ka rtse in the northwest, from the Simi la pass (and Lhasa) in the southeast, and

[460] Trungpa 1991: 158.

[461] N: 7a. According to Lha btsun, gTsang smyon had an important encounter with his personal *yidam* Hevajra at this time (L: 14–15). This episode is known as gTsang smyon's "secret *rnam thar*" (*gsang ba'i rnam thar*) and is depicted almost identically in all three *rnam thars*. rGod tshang ras pa and dNgos grub dpal 'bar have another opinion concerning when the meeting with Hevajra occurred, however, both agreeing that it happened when gTsang smyon visited Tsāri for the second time several years later. Following the opinion of the majority—rGod tshang ras pa and dNgos grub dpal 'bar—I will therefore return to the secret *rnam thar*.

[462] G: 26; L: 15; N: 7a.

[463] According to Lha btsun, gTsang smyon went to La phyi before he went home to mKhar kha (L: 15). This is not mentioned in the other *rnam thars*. This probably means that he was away a longer time before returning, and thus the time discrepancies between the accounts of the *rnam thar*s are slightly reduced.

[464] L: 15. Lha btsun states that gTsang smyon was sixteen when he returned to mKhar kha (L: 15) but according to rGod tshang ras pa he was around eighteen or perhaps nineteen.

[465] G: 26; L: 15; N: 7a.

[466] G: 25–26. For the final instructions in their entirety, see above (p. 90).

from Gro mo on the Sikkim frontier in the southwest joined in rGyal rtse, and the town was a center of commerce and pilgrimage.[467] Many people from all over Tibet and its surrounding areas gathered there. Since mKhar kha belonged to the same part of Nyang/Myang as rGyal rtse, and was situated only about fifteen kilometers north of the town, it was probably a natural choice for a monk who wanted to engage in advanced studies.[468] The close links between mKhar kha and rGyal rtse are further strengthened by the fact that the first prince of rGyal rtse, dPal ldan bzang po (born 1318), founded both places.[469]

The main temple (gtsug lha khang) of dPal 'khor chos sde was built by one of dPal ldan bzang po's successors, Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags pa (1389–1442) between 1418 and 1425. Gradually several other temples and buildings were constructed, and in the year 1427, when Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags pa had reached the age of thirty-eight, the foundation of the famous Auspicious Stūpa with Many Doors[470] was laid. This stūpa—also known as sKu 'bum (Hundred Thousand Images)—was one of the largest ever built in Tibet, famous for its many chapels and statues.[471] The decoration of the stūpa continued until around 1440 by which time an encircling wall, several temples and dwelling places for monks had been built. The development of dPal 'khor chos sde did not end in 1440, but continued for several centuries, and by the end of the 17th century sixteen colleges had been established.[472] When gTsang smyon entered the monastic complex the number of colleges was fewer, but the Sa skya-, dGe lugs- and Zhwa lu-schools were most likely represented with separate colleges. The Gur pa monastic department, which gTsang smyon entered, was primarily a Sa skya monastery, perhaps with a further emphasis on the Bo dong system.[473] The building that hosted the department is situated in front of the sKu 'bum Stūpa, and is one of the few buildings of dPal 'khor chos sde that remains intact.[474] In great teaching monasteries such as this one, each subject had its own department, and the Gur pa department probably specialized in the study of *Hevajra Tantra*. Its name most likely refers to the extraordinary explanatory tantra of the Hevajra cycle, *Vajra Dome* (*rDo rje gur*).[475] Sha ra ba had told gTsang smyon to study

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467 Gyurme Dorje 2004: 267–268.
468 Nyang stod is known as Gyantse County nowadays (Gyurme Dorje 2004: 269).
469 Ricca, Franco and Erberto Lo Bue 1993: 14.
470 bKra shis sgo mang Stūpa.
471 For a detailed description of the stūpa, see Tucci 1989 a, b, c; Ricca, Franco and Erberto Lo Bue 1993. For a recent photo, see Figure 8 (p. 261).
472 Gyurme Dorje 2004: 269.
473 The Bo dong affiliation is suggested by T. G. Dhongthog Rinpoche (oral communication to Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 50, n. 21).
474 Its interiors were seriously damaged during the cultural revolution and not much of interest remains inside nowadays. The stūpa and the main temple (*gtsug lha khang*) of dPal 'khor chos sde have somehow been spared the vicissitudes of the times. For a recent photo of dPal 'khor chos sde, see Figure 9 (p. 261).
475 Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 50, n. 21.

Hevajra Tantra as well as other tantras, and he had also told him that Hevajra was his *yi dam*. The Gur pa department would therefore have been a natural choice for him.

The *rnam thars* give different accounts of gTsang smyon's age when he entered the monastery and also of the length of time he spent in dPal 'khor chos sde. According to Lha btsun he stayed for four years, and according to dNgos grub dpal 'bar three years.[476] Lha btsun states that he was seventeen when he entered the monastery[477] and since rGod tshang ras pa states that he was eighteen when he left mKhar kha and met Sha ra ba[478] he must have been eighteen or nineteen when entering dPal 'khor chos sde. If rGod tshang ras pa agrees with dNgos grub dpal 'bar in that gTsang smyon stayed for three years, then gTsang smyon attended the famous monastery in rGyal rtse during about 1468–1472 (according to Lha btsun) or 1469–1472/1470–1473 (according to dNgos grub dpal 'bar and rGod tshang ras pa).

By the time gTsang smyon left dPal 'khor chos sde new images were installed in the sKu 'bum stūpa. In 1474 the master 'Jams dbyangs dkon mchog bzang po arrived to conduct the consecration ceremony for the new statues that were placed in the topmost chapel of the stūpa.[479] This master might have been the abbot of the monastery at the time, and could thus have been the abbot when gTsang smyon stayed there, a few years earlier.[480] In 1447 the prince of rGyal rtse, bKra shis 'phags pa placed his twenty-year-old son, bKra shis rab brtan bzang po, on the throne of rGyal rtse, and he was perhaps the prince of rGyal rtse while gTsang smyon stayed there.[481]

Already from the very beginning dPal 'khor chos sde was a place were different schools and traditions coexisted. The princes of rGyal rtse had been affiliated with both the Sa skya and the Zhwa lu schools for a long time, and they also had strong religious links to the rNying ma school.[482] One of Tsong kha pa's main disciples, mKhas grub rje dGe legs dpal bzang po (1385–1438), aided the rGyal rtse prince Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags pa in establishing dPal 'khor chos sde, and thus the place also had a strong link with the—at the time relatively new—dGe lugs pa school. Despite the favor that the dGe lugs pa school began to enjoy from the 15th century onwards, the figure of Bu ston and his Zhwa lu tradition continued to be of importance, as did the Sa skya pa*s*. The spirit of the monastic complex seem to have resembled the *ris med* ("unbiased") movement of 19th and 20th century Eastern

[476] L: 15; N: 7a. rGod tshang ras pa provides no information on the length of his stay.
[477] L: 15.
[478] G: 20.
[479] Ricca, Franco and Erberto Lo Bue 1993: 31.
[480] Ricca, Franco and Erberto Lo Bue 1993: 31.
[481] Ricca, Franco and Erberto Lo Bue 1993: 29.
[482] Ricca, Franco and Erberto Lo Bue 1993: 11.

Tibet in certain ways.[483] The notable difference being the presence of the dGe lugs pa rather than the bKa' brgyud school.

When gTsang smyon, now in his late teens, returned to the area of his birth, the many experiences he had had during his approximately one year long period away from mKhar kha must have changed him. He had traveled to both Lhasa and Tsāri, and he had met his root lama, Sha ra ba. Together with him, he had undergone extensive training, and he had been practising solitary meditation for long periods. This resulted in many deep and powerful inner experiences that must have had a profound impact and changed him. Not only that, he had been appointed dharma heir of Sha ra ba, and if the accounts of the *rnam thar*s are correct, he was the main holder of the lineage of his lama. Thus, it was a bKa' brgyud lineage holder with much experience in meditation who returned and joined the dPal 'khor chos sde. The time spent in dPal 'khor chos sde was not an end in itself however, but just another step in gTsang smyon's spiritual career. He needed systematic training in the complicated tantric rituals, and he needed to study the tantric commentaries. A master of the tantras (*rdo rje slob dpon*) must be able to decode and comprehend the often highly symbolic meaning of the tantric texts so that he can teach it to others. He also needs to know how to perform many complicated rituals and their hand gestures (*phyag rgya*). When reciting the tantric liturgies it is necessary to use the right melodies (*dbyangs*) and do it at the proper pace. The different musical instruments used in the ceremonies must also be mastered, and a tantric master must also know how and when the many offerings (*mchod pa*) that accompany a tantric ritual are to be carried out. Making ritual offering cakes (*gtor ma*), performing ritual feasts (*tshog 'khor*) and fire offerings (*sbyin bsreg*), as well as knowing how to perform ritual dances (*'chams*) and consecration ceremonies (*rab tu gnas pa*), must also be learned. Moreover, a tantric master must know how to draw maṇḍalas and bestow empowerments (*dbang*). A thorough and proper knowledge of all this requires long and systematic training, and although gTsang smyon was by no means a novice at this point, he still needed to learn more.

It is possible that the ecumenical spirit of dPal 'khor chos sde had an impact on gTsang smyon and also that he was exposed to the technique of wood-block printing for the first time while staying there.[484]

Thu'u bkwan summarizes the three or perhaps four years gTsang smyon stayed in the monastic complex as follows:

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[483] Smith has written two informative essays about the non-sectarian (*ris med*) movement (Smith 2001: 227–272).

[484] During the years 1439–1441 an early wood-block print was produced at dPal 'khor chos sde (Ricca, Franco and Erberto Lo Bue 1993: 26; Schaeffer 2007: 233). As will be further explored in Chapter 9 gTsang smyon later used the same technique to make his literary works available.

> From gYu lung pa yon tan rgya mtsho [He received] empowerments such as Hevajra, the Concise Tradition of Gur, and Vajrakīlaya according to the Sa skya tradition. [In addition, he also] received instructions of the *Hevajra Tatra*, *Vajra Dome*, and *Sampuṭa* tantras, and by listening to the complete explanations of the Indian and Tibetan commentaries he truly understood them. Moreover, from the master Kun dga' nyi ma and paṇchen Don grub grags pa and others he received advice on the development and fulfillment [stages], tantra explanations and secret mantra empowerments. [Moreover, he also] listened to many [instructions] on the practice of hand-gestures, maṇḍala-drawing and melodies [for recitation], and so forth.[485]

rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun provide more details about gTsang smyon's studies. rGod tshang ras pa also describes how gTsang smyon studied the commentaries of the Hevajra root tantra (*brTag gnyis*) by 'Gro mgon 'phags pa (1235–1280) and how he "took the words and meaning to his heart without leaving anything out."[486] Lha btsun mentions that gTsang smyon received, and internalized, the complete *Path with the Results*[487] transmission while at dPal 'khor chos sde.[488]

God tshang ras pa then states that gTsang smyon's way of learning differed from that of others. Without any effort "by being shown a mere sign or hearing [a teaching] just once, he took the words and meaning to his heart without leaving anything out" he declares.[489] rGod tshang ras pa also describes how gTsang smyon mastered debate (*rtsod pa*) and composition (*rtsom pa*), skills that he later had much use for.[490] gTsang smyon soon became "the nectar of the eyes of beings, similar to the excellent swan in the middle of learned water birds," as dNgos grub dpal 'bar poetically describes it.[491]

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[485] T: 42: *g.yu lung pa yon tan rgya mtsho'i drung nas sa lugs kyi dgyes rdor / gur rigs bsdus / rdo rje phur pa sogs kyi dbang rgyud brtag nyis rdo rje gur / sambhuṭa (sampuṭa) / rnams la rgya 'grel dang bod 'grel gyi steng nas bshad pa mtha' chos pa gsaṇ / gzhan yang slob dpon kun dga' nyi ma / paṇ chen don grub grags pa sogs la gsang snags kyi dbang dang rgyud kyi bshad pa bskyed rdzogs kyi gdams pa / gar thig dbyangs sogs kyi phyag len mang du gsan no /.*

[486] G: 27: *[...] gtso bor rtsa rgyud rtag gnyis dang / 'gro mgon 'phags pa'i grel pa rnams tshig don ma lus pa thugs su tshud [...] /.*

[487] *Lam 'bras bu.*

[488] L: 16.

[489] G: 27: *re gsan cing brda' bstan pa tsam gyis tshig don ma lus par thugs su tshud cing mkhyen pas /.*

[490] G: 27.

[491] N: 7b: *mkhas pa'i chu bya 'tshogs pa'i dbus na ngang pa'i rgyal po ltar / skye bo rnams kyi mig gi bdud rtsir gyur par mdzad cing /.*

Chapter 5: The Monk becomes a Heruka

Up to this point, the *rnam thar*s of gTsang smyon have followed a relatively common pattern of Buddhist hagiography: his birth was accompanied by miracles and auspicious dreams; he had been foretold in authoritative Buddhist texts; immediately after his birth, he started to display extraordinary behavior that set him apart from other children; he spontaneously sat in meditation posture for long periods; he praised previous masters; and even in the games of childhood he bestowed empowerments, and so on. Then, early in life, he became a monk and devoted his time and energy to study and recitation. As a monk, he was extremely careful to keep his monastic precepts, and he amazed people with his memorization abilities and recitation skills. Later he met his root lama and entered the tantric path, received empowerments and profound esoteric instructions. After the period with his lama, he studied for several years in a monastery and eventually acquired all the necessary skills of a vajra master. These themes, with some minor variations, are portrayed in *rnam thar*s about many Buddhist masters in a very similar way. gTsang smyon's extraordinariness during the early part of his life is thus shared with many extraordinary individuals within the Buddhist tradition.

After the period of studies in the monastic complex of rGyal rtse gTsang smyon started to behave in a way that set him apart from most great Buddhist masters of a more "normative" kind. Instead of becoming a fully ordained *bhikṣu*, he began to model his life-style and way of practice on the tantric siddhas of India. Unlike many other Tibetan masters, he emulated the siddhas in a quite literal way. This radical and rather unusual move away from the monastery upset some of his contemporaries while impressing and inspiring devotion in others. This chapter will describe how gTsang smyon's life changed and how the exemplary monk became a wandering yogin with no fixed abode and quite bizarre and shocking behavior at times.

Leaving the Monastery under Dramatic Circumstances

The radical change in gTsang smyon's behavior and outer appearance started after a vision in which he encountered the eight goddesses of his *yi dam*, Hevajra. The vision occurred when gTsang smyon and the other monks of the

Gur pa department were staying at a monastery called rDo rje gdan to practise dharma.[492]

> At dawn, in the middle of rainbow-light, he saw eight very beautiful goddesses, but the central figures: Hevajra, the Father and Mother was missing.[493] By his own pride of [being] Hevajra he entered into union[494] with each one of the goddesses. He experienced different kinds of bliss with each one of the goddesses and became drunk with an undefiled bliss of body, speech and mind.[495]

gTsang smyon's many years of Hevajra study and practice had finally yielded its result and no notion of being separate from Hevajra seemed to remain in his mind. Thus, gTsang smyon had reached the conviction, or realization as Tibetan exegetes often express it, of actually being Hevajra.

dNgos grub dpal 'bar explains how gTsang smyon was transformed after the vision, and how he, from that day onward, never parted from the underlying sublime essence of all phenomena, the so-called *dharmatā*.[496] Due to this, he became charismatic and fearless. Resembling a lion, he no longer felt any need to prostrate, use polite expressions, or exhibit other forms of respectful behavior towards anybody. Convinced that he was Hevajra, gTsang smyon did not even bow down or show respect to powerful people such as kings, queens or ministers; instead he played pranks and made jokes. People who were unaware of the reason for his provocative behavior were upset and shocked.[497]

Of the three biographers, only rGod tshang ras pa gives a detailed account of what happened when gTsang smyon left his monastery. In the sixth chapter of the *Heart of the Sun* he describes the following colorful scenario:

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[492] Tucci mentions two different monasteries near rGyal rtse known by this name: gNas rnying, fifteen kilometers south of rGyal rtse, and Mag lde lding, on the road between rGyal rtse and gZhi ka rtse (Tucci 1989 a: 56, 67, 144).

[493] This means that the main figures Hevajra and his consort, Nairātmyā (bDag med ma), were missing and only the surrounding eight goddesses were there.

[494] *sNyoms par zhugs pa*, this term generally means "To have sexual union" but it has a deeper meaning. The term is used in the unsurpassed yoga tantras (*Anuttarayogatantra*) to indicate that the male and female consorts of a deity are standing together in sexual union. This kind of sexual union represents a perfect harmony of the female, wisdom (*prajñā*) and the male, method (*upāya*) (Padma Karpo Translation Committee 2003).

[495] N: 7b: *de dag gi gnas skabs gcig na / rdo rje gdan bya bar chos bar mdzad cing bzhugs pa las / tho rangs cig 'ja' 'od kyi dbus na / dges pa rdo rje yab yum gtso bo mi bzhugs pa'i / lha mo brgyad shin tu yid du 'ong ba gzigs te / rang nyid dges pa rdo rje'i nga rgyal gyis / lha mo so so la snyoms par zhugs pas / lha mo re re la bde ba'i rnam pa mi 'dra ba / re re nyams su myong zhing / lus ngag yid gsum zag med kyi bde bas ra ro ba byung gsung /*. There are almost identical passages in G: 28; L: 16. The section in rGod tshang ras pa (G: 28) is translated in Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 25–26.

[496] N: 7b.

[497] G: 28; L: 16; N: 7b.

One time the provincial ruler and his ministers came to the monastery from rGyang rtse (rGyal rtse).[498] The monks had assembled in a very huge gathering and [gTsang smyon] went into the rows carrying a skull-cup and a thigh-bone trumpet. He ate the tea, soup, and so on, in his skull-cup. Adding *tsam pa* and biscuits, he stirred the mixture with his thighbone trumpet and ate. The master of discipline noticed that the monks around him had started to laugh. He asked, "What kind of behavior of monks in the assembly is this?" and prepared to beat [gTsang smyon] with a stick.

"Oh, set aside beating me and listen! In which sūtra or tantra is it explained that one is not allowed to carry a skull-cup and thigh-bone trumpet into the assembly of monks? You prove it!"

The [master of discipline] could not answer and [gTsang smyon] said, "Well then let's have a debate and I will explain it."

The master of discipline said, "I will not answer you who take pride in your [knowledge of] scripture and reasoning and are self-centered." He went to the monastic department and said, "The conduct of this monk of yours is faulty. You must expel him." Relying on this report the spiritual master (*slob dpon*) scolded [gTsang smyon] a bit, thus establishing the conditions [for his departure].

Then the Lord thought, "Now I have reached the end of hearing and reflecting, as it was stated in prophecies of the lama and the ḍākinīs. If I do not now gain experience through meditation, knowing and understanding many words will not liberate me. It would be like the empty talk of a bat[499] or the logic of 'Bras dkar.[500] To set an example for those who hold listening and reflection alone as the ultimate, and are like a wreath of foam piled high priding itself on being a mountain; and also because it is the lama's word, the time to go and meditate in the supreme holy place in the south, the glorious rTsa ri (Tsāri), has arrived. Moreover, it is hard to accomplish [the practice] with these monk's clothes on, and also outwardly a bit at odds with the practice of secret mantra. Since Dharma mainly concerns actions performed by the mind, there is also no real certainty in things. I must offer my belongings to the Sangha, and go."

He offered his belongings and the three dharma robes to the congregation. The lower robe he exchanged for a cloak with a *dge bshes* called Sangs rgyas dpal bzang. One evening he spent the night above the guest room in the place usually used for relaxing, and thoroughly studied the *Hevajra Tantra*, its headings, tantric explanations, and the *Eight Thousand [verses]*,[501] and so on. Then he said, "Let this be the last study session of mine in this place!" Early

[498] rGyal rtse probably refers to the fort-like castle on the hilltop above dPal 'khor chos sde, the rGyal rtse rdzong.

[499] According to T.G. Dhongtong Rinpoche this should be read as *lpags phyi* meaning bat (Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 51, n. 23).

[500] According to mKhan po Ngag dbang rdo rje this should be read as *'Bras dkar* which is the name of someone who says auspicious words at New Year. Like the previous saying (*gtam dpe*) about the bat, it refers to the idea that knowing words of dharma and being able to talk is pointless as long as real understanding is lacking.

[501] *brGyad stong pa—Prajñāpāramitā in Eight Thousand Verses, Yum bsdus pa shlo ka stong brgyad pa.*

the following morning [gTsang smyon] went to mKhar kha and stayed there for about three or four days.[502]

Embarking on the Path of a Wandering Yogin

As this account by rGod tshang ras pa reveals, it was now impossible for gTsang smyon to continue his life as a monk in a monastery. The vision at rDo rje gdan seems to have been the spark that ignited the fire of the spontaneous, unusual and bizarre conduct that was to become his trademark. This fire had just started to burn, and would burn stronger and stronger in the years that followed. Its nature will be exemplified in detail in this and the next chapter. gTsang smyon was now gaining confidence in being Hevajra and since Hevajra is a so-called heruka this was a kind of preliminary "birth of the heruka", in a sense. It was not the final birth of the heruka, however, as the most important transformative vision was yet to come.

To remain within the confines of a monastery and adhere to the many rules of a monk was no longer a support on the path towards accomplishment and ultimately enlightenment, but rather something that made progress difficult for the young monk. Having accomplished his sūtric and tantric studies, he was now extremely learned, but he was still lacking the inner realization that was needed to reach the final goal—enlightenment. This pattern is often found in Indian siddha hagiographies; in order to reach real understanding even the monastery and monkhood must be given up. The many rules and the lifestyle that previously were a necessary support for practice and accomplishment eventually becomes a hindrance. A distinct example of this is found in the *rnam thar* of one of the spiritual ancestors of gTsang smyon, Nāropa (1012–1100). Nāropa is presented as an extremely learned monk who could defeat any scholar in debate, but once when he was studying an extremely ugly woman appeared and asked him if he understood the sense of what he was studying. Nāropa answered that he did and the ugly woman started to cry. When Nāropa asked her about the reason for her sadness, she answered that she became sad because a great scholar such as he lied, and falsely asserted that he understood the sense which he did not.[503]

Nāropa realized that the ugly woman was right and asked her who, then, understands the sense. The woman told him that her brother, Tilopa, did and then disappeared like a rainbow in the sky. This incident encouraged Nāropa to search for Tilopa, so that he could learn the sense of the words from him. Nāropa gave up his belongings and books, left the monastery, and started to search for his guru. When he eventually found Tilopa, he was forced to abandon all his preconceptions about right and wrong, purity and impurity, and

[502] G: 28–29. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1. Most of this section is also translated in Stearns [Kalnins] (1985: 26–27). I have followed her translation closely.
[503] Guenther 1986: 24–25.

so on. After twelve years of practice under Tilopa's guidance Nāropa reached the goal and become a perfected one, a siddha, just like his guru. The path towards this exalted state included extreme acts of self-denial, such as: stealing, assaulting a queen and dragging her around, entering into a sexual relationship with a girl, and eventually giving the girl to his guru as a gift.[504] Acts such as these were not only at odds with the monastic discipline, but also at odds with the norms of society at large. The extreme and sometimes even criminal character of such acts were not pointless however, in fact they were acts of a higher and more advanced discipline according to the Tibetan and Indian exegetes of Tantric Buddhism. At a certain point, everything must be given up in order to reach final salvation.

Another example of this kind of sudden change of conduct and its relation to spiritual insight is found in a *rnam thar* of Ma gcig lab sgron (1055–1153). When Ma gcig attained realization, she stopped wearing nice clothes and started to dress in rags. She began to keep company with beggars and lepers, rather than with monks and teachers, as previously. She also slept anywhere, on the side of a road or in the house of a leper and wandered all around the country without aim. She ate just about anything, and did not care whether she was slandered or praised. In short, she had given up worldly attachments and remained utterly fearless in the equanimity of the dharmatā.[505]

gTsang smyon, like Nāropa and Ma gcig lab sgron before him, realized that the time was ripe to continue on his spiritual path until he thoroughly understood the sense of what he had studied—and the life of a monk in a monastery was not conducive to this understanding. He thus paid heed to the next series of commands that Sha ra ba had given him before they parted: "Wear rags for clothes. Give up these three: food, clothes, and fame. Be a child of the mountains; wear the mists as your clothes. Through disciplined conduct, carry the objects of perception onto the path. Trample on that which is dreaded!"[506]

At this point, gTsang smyon had "dispelled all his misconceptions regarding listening (*thos*) and reflecting (*bsam*)" and the time for practice had arrived.[507] Before leaving he read about the Ever Weeping Bodhisattva, Sadāprārudita, and was so moved that he began to shed tears. Filled with unbiased compassion towards all sentient beings, he then left the monastery.[508] After leaving his monastery, gTsang smyon never again dressed or behaved like a monk and he seldom visited or lived in monasteries. Instead, he kept his hair long, dressed like a tantric yogin, and wandered around from place to place. The only time he settled down for longer periods was when

[504] The twelve acts of self-denial are translated in Guenther 1986: 43–86.
[505] Edou 1996: 133.
[506] G 25–26. For the commands in their entirety, see above (p 90).
[507] G: 30. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.
[508] L: 16.

he was meditating, or later in life, composing and compiling texts, and this he mainly did in remote caves and retreat places.[509]

Before leaving for the holy Tsāri wilderness, gTsang smyon visited his relatives in mKhar kha. Then, on the evening of the 15th day of the month (the full-moon day), accompanied by his younger brother, dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, he left. The year was probably 1472 when the two young brothers left mKhar kha, and gTsang smyon was twenty-one.[510] The following morning they arrived at a mountain pass just when the sun rose at its peak. The beautiful sight was interpreted as an auspicious omen (*rten 'brel*) and gTsang smyon told his brother that they should perform a *gaṇacakra*. While they were performing the tantric feast, five women appeared with beer for the ritual. According to the *rnam thars*, the ladies were ḍākinīs welcoming the two brothers to Tsāri.[511]

Continuing to travel towards Tsāri they soon arrived at the ferry place of Sha ra and there they met the governor (*nang so*) of Hor shag with his retinue. gTsang smyon had now changed his way of interacting with other people and seemed especially keen on insulting people of high status, such as kings and leaders, which we will see many examples of in the *rnam thars*. When the governor asked gTsang smyon where he was going gTsang smyon answered: "I came from behind and I am heading forwards."[512] The governor remarked that gTsang smyon had a harsh mouth and received yet another abusive reply from the young yogin: "There is nothing [I] can do about it, having anointed much oil on the mouth it is still hard.[513] But if you need this soft and cold glacier water I can give it to you."[514] Despite, or perhaps because of, gTsang smyon's provocative ways the governor became convinced that gTsang smyon was a genuine and good yogin. He even requested gTsang smyon to stay as his officiating priest (*mchod gnas*). gTsang smyon answered that he could not be the officiating priest of just one person but

[509] Later in life he was sometimes invited to stay with leaders who had become his benefactors, but he always kept his wandering life-style and preferred remote retreat places.
[510] As will be seen, Lha btsun states that he was twenty-one when he reached Tsāri (L: 18) and this corresponds well with rGod tshang ras pa's and dNgos grub dpal 'bar's *rnam thars*. Although the latter two *rnam thars* do not give any dates or ages, the chronology and years spent in the monastery correspond with his age when leaving mKhar kha, and it thus seem that the chronological discrepancies between the three *rnam thars* have disappeared. As already stated in a previous footnote, Tibetans count the age of persons differently than we do in the West: everyone is one year old at birth, and 21 therefore means 20 according to the Western way of counting. As mentioned above, I have kept the age as it is given in the *rnam thars*.
[511] G: 29–30; L: 17; N: 8a.
[512] G: 30. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1; L: 17; N: 8b.
[513] An almost identical passage is found in a *rnam thar* of Thang stong rgyal po ('Gyur med bde chen 1976: 184). For an English translation of this passage, see Stearns 2007: 271.
[514] G: 30. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1; L: 17; N: 8b.

would be such to all beings.[515] Finally, meat and flour were offered to gTsang smyon and his brother as provisions for their journey.

First, they went towards Lhasa by way of Rong chung, and the next day they arrived at the New Fort (rDzong gsar) of sNe pa mdo. At this place, gTsang smyon not only behaved provocatively and insultingly, but also in an outright mad and shocking manner.[516] Lha btsun and dNgos grub dpal 'bar state that gTsang smyon "acted out the conduct" (*spyod mdzad*) in the market place and that people became so upset that they tried to kill him with stones and knives.[517] Only rGod tshang ras pa describes what happened in the market place of the New Fort of sNe pa mdo and therefore it is to the *Heart of the Sun* we now turn. rGod tshang ras pa describes how a ransom offering (*mdos*) was being performed in the place when gTsang smyon arrived. Soldiers participated in the ceremony and many people had gathered. Tucci explains that the *mdos*-ritual "consists of offering gifts which are particularly valued by the hostile powers, so that, contented (*mnyes*) and satiated (*tshims*), they will calm themselves (*zhi ba*) and abstain from further persecution."[518] The offerings that are made in the ritual are arranged in specific ways as a kind of ransom and the "hostile powers", or demons if you will, are trapped in a so-called "thread cross".[519] It is plausible that a ritual such as this, which is directed towards demons and hostile powers, could be considered dangerous. It is also reasonable to imagine that the people who had assembled believed that negative forces and demons were literally present during the performance of the ransom offering.

gTsang smyon went into the crowd and overturned and broke the huge ransom offering (*mdos*). Then he started to eat the cakes (*gtor ma*) that had stood on the shrine he just had destroyed. He not only ate the offering cakes, but also threw them around and the many assembled people and soldiers became upset and probably frightened as well.[520] gTsang smyon was likely regarded as a demon coming to consume the offerings, or perhaps as a madman who did not understand the importance of the ritual. The crowd did not accept such behavior and began attacking him. They tried various means to kill him, but despite throwing stones at him, stabbing him with swords and lances, hitting him with sticks, and shooting at him with arrows, he remained unharmed. The reason for this was that he had entered into a meditative trance called "very firm vajra"[521] that made him invulnerable.[522]

[515] L: 18.
[516] G 30 (in this *rnam thar* the name of the place is spelled: sNel pa 'dos), L: 18; N: 8b.
[517] L: 18; N: 8b.
[518] Tucci 1980: 176.
[519] See Tucci 1980: 174, figure 15 a, for an illustration.
[520] G: 30.
[521] *Rab tu brtan pa rdo rje.*
[522] G: 31.

gTsang smyon then rose and started to sing the mantra of the bodhisattva of compassion: *Oṃ maṇipadme hūṃ*. He thus revealed his actual identity, a compassionate bodhisattva disguised as a madman. The furious people were not convinced of this, however, but concluded, "This certainly was the miracle of an elemental spirit or ghoul."[523]

Eventually:

> ...the soldiers drove [gTsang smyon] in front of them towards the sKyid chu river, the women wailed and the monks performed the final parts of the ransom offering.
>
> At that time, in front of everyone, [gTsang smyon] did not sink down into the water of the river but became a great whirlwind and landed on the opposite side of the river. Everyone, seeing they could do nothing, became amazed and perplexed.[524]

The incident above was the first, but definitely not the last, of its kind; the *rnam thar*s contain many similar stories. Time after time gTsang smyon's behavior was so provocative to people around him that they tried to kill him. He was often held to be a demon and people were often afraid of him.[525] Only gTsang smyon's miraculous powers saved him, and it seems that he sometimes deliberately acted in a provocative and mad way just to be able to demonstrate his extraordinary powers. This made him famous, and some people started to believe that he was a true yogin who should be venerated rather than despised. gTsang smyon gained many of his supporters and benefactors as a result of this kind of outrageous conduct, and rGod tshang ras pa informs us that the incident depicted above had exactly such a result. When reports of his activities at the ransom offering reached the ears of the landlord dGe gnyan chos skyabs, he invited gTsang smyon for tea and beer. The landlord was impressed by the young yogin and faith arose in him. dGe gnyan chos skyabs was later rewarded with wealth as a result of having offered drinks and showed devotion towards the unusual yogin.[526] The latter theme is also commonplace in the *rnam thar*s, the result of respecting and displaying devotion to gTsang smyon, despite his provocations, is fortune and wealth, while the result of not respecting him and lacking faith in him could be disastrous. The mechanism behind this is usually understood by Buddhist exegetes to be cause and effect. To despise a buddha or bodhisattva is a heinous crime according to Buddhism, while immeasurable merits are obtained from even the smallest act of devotion to such an individual.[527]

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523 G: 31. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.
524 G: 31. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.
525 For a discussion of how the ghost/demon metaphor was used by both Buddhist and Pāśupata yogins of India, see Davidson 2002: 221.
526 G: 31; L: 18; N: 8b.
527 See, for example, Patrul Rinpoche 1994: 115–116, 123–124.

gTsang smyon and his brother then continued towards Tsāri and when they passed through Dwags po they visited Zur mkhar,[528] the place where gTsang smyon had met his root lama, Sha ra ba, about four years earlier.[529] An intense yearning for Sha ra ba, who had passed away while gTsang smyon was studying in sPal 'khor chos sde, in the year 1470, arose in gTsang smyon's mind.

> Longing for the incomparable precious one, Sha ra ba, he shed tears [and] performed many full-length prostrations and circumambulations at [Sha ra ba's former] dwelling place, at the place where he passed away, and at the shrine where he had been cremated. Then [gTsang smyon] listened to all the dharma teachings that A 'o chos rje mNyam nyid rdo rje ba had received from the incomparable precious one [Sha ra ba], such as tantras and instructions that dispel doubts, and he once again listened to the ritual practice of U rgyan[530] and the permission blessing (*rjes gnang*) and methods for accomplishment of the Black Field Protector with a Lion Face.[531]

Not being able to meet Sha ra ba in person, gTsang smyon met the famous physician A 'o chos rje mNyam nyid rdo rje, whom gTsang smyon had met on his first trip to Tsāri. As mentioned, it was thanks to A 'o chos rje that gTsang smyon met Sha ra ba. Now, the physician acted not only as a dharma brother, but also as a lama to gTsang smyon, and he is therefore listed as one of gTsang smyon's lamas in Thu'u bkwan Chos kyi nyi ma's short *rnam thar* of gTsang smyon.[532]

Patronage and Madness

gTsang smyon had now received all the transmissions of Sha ra ba that he needed for his practice and returned to his travels. Lha btsun states that gTsang smyon was twenty-one years old when he and his younger brother came to Rib la spang mo in Tsāri.[533] If Lha btsun is right, gTsang smyon thus arrived at his favorite place in 1472, and in Rib la spang mo an important encounter that was to have significant and lasting consequences for gTsang smyon occurred. Here he met the governor (*nang so*) or "myriarch" (*khri*

[528] Spelled Zung mkhar by rGod tshang ras pa (G: 31).
[529] G: 31. The visit to Zur mkhar is not mentioned by Lha btsun or dNgos grub dpal 'bar.
[530] *U rgyan snyen bsgrub*. A ritual practice composed by U rgyan pa rin chen dpal (1229/1230–1309).
[531] G: 31. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.
[532] T: 42.
[533] Rib la spang mo (G: 32); Ri la dpang mo (N: 8b); Ril la spang mo (L: 18). A mountain pass named Rib la, situated along the old pilgrimage route of Tsāri rNying ma, is given on the map in Gyurme Dorje 2004: 235. A pass named Ri pa la or Rib pa la (Hermit pass) is mentioned by Huber. The pass is crossed by pilgrims from Dwags po (Huber 1999: 106).

dpon)[534] of Bya, bKra shis dar rgyas, who was to become his faithful supporter and benefactor. He also met two important religious masters; the bSam sdings rDo rje phag mo incarnation, Kun dga' bzang mo (1459–1502), and the Bo dong pa master, dPal 'chi med grub pa (1420s–1480s).[535] That the meeting with the three dignitaries was considered important is proven by the fact that it is described at some length in all three *rnam thar*s.[536] Before recounting the meeting, it is important to know something about the people with whom he interacted. The story loses much of its significance otherwise.

bKra shis dar rgyas was the myriarch of Bya, or Bya yul, a large area south of the Dwags po and Yar lung regions of Southern Tibet.[537] Tsāri belonged to the Bya myriarchy the capital of of which was Chos rgyal lhun po, which gTsang smyon later visited. According to Cyrus Stearns, bKra shis dar rgyas was one of the most generous religious patrons of the fifteenth century.[538] This is confirmed by the Tibetan historian bSod nams grags pa, who mentions that bKra shis dar rgyas of Bya carried out many meritorious works. bSod nams grags pa describes how he ordered a golden image of Buddha Śākyamuni to be made, a temple to be built, a copy of *bKa' 'gyur* to be written in golden letters, and a large stūpa to be built.[539] "Nevertheless, he was very partial as regards religion and his fame was therefore restricted to a part only," bSod nams grags pa continues.[540]

The Venerable Lady Kun dga' bzang mo, was born in Kong po in 1459 and she was recognized as the reincarnation of the female master Chos kyi sgron ma (1422–1455).[541] Like her predecessor, Kun dga' bzang mo was considered to be an embodiment of the Indian tantric deity Vajravārāhī.[542] Kun dga' bzang mo was thirteen (fourteen according to Tibetan calculation) when the meeting occurred, and given the way gTsang smyon talked to her, this might appear a bit odd. On the other hand, we must take into account the

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534 *Nang so* and *khri dpon* are titles used for district leaders. Both titles refer to the same office, and *nang so* is more commonly encountered in the sources.
535 Diemberger mentions this meeting (2007: 252).
536 G: 32–33; L: 18–19; N: 8b–9a. As usual it is rGod tshang ras pa who gives the most detailed description.
537 bKra shis dar rgyas is sometimes called Bya pa in the texts.
538 Stearns 2007: 581, n. 1110.
539 bSod nams grags pa, translated in Tucci 1971: 238.
540 bSod nams grags pa, translated in Tucci 1971: 238.
541 Chos kyi sgron ma was the daughter of the king of mNga' ris Gung thang, Lha dbang rGyal mtshan (1404–1464) and after a forced marriage she renounced her royal heritage and devoted the rest of her life to Buddhism. She became the main disciple of the famous and influential Bo dong paṇ chen phyogs las rnam rgyal (1376–1451) and a fully ordained nun. Later she also became the consort of her teacher and of the great siddha Thang stong rgyal po. For a study of the bSam sdings rDo rje phag mo lineage, see Diemberger 2007.
542 Vajravārāhī (rDo rje phag mo) continued to be embodied in Tibetan women, and the monastery bSam sdings, near the eastern shore of the large lake Yar 'brog mtsho, became the main seat of this unique female incarnation lineage. The present incarnation is number twelve in the lineage and she leads the bSam sdings monastery. She is also a high ranking government cadre in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

fact that she was a reincarnated master. Such individuals are generally given much responsibility and are treated as adults at an early age.[543]

dPal 'chi med grub pa was a major disciple of Bo dong paṇ chen phyogs las rnam rgyal (1376–1451) and had received teachings and empowerments from him together with Chos kyi sgron ma. When Chos kyi sgron ma died, he took care of her reincarnation, Kun dga' bzang mo, and they often traveled together.[544] rGod tshang ras pa describes their meeting as follows:

> In gNas nang, [gTsang smyon's] brother was sent off ahead with their belongings and a yak. The Lord came after, wearing a lotus hat of Urgyan with feathers and silk on his head, a cloak on his body, and holding his weapon—the khaṭvāṅga—in his hand. [gTsang smyon] went to Rib la spang mo where many people were swarming around.
>
> "What are you doing?" he asked.
>
> "The Venerable Lady Kun dga' bzang mo and dPal 'chi med grub pa are both going toward Dwags po. Governor bKra shis dar rgyas and his entourage, the patron and priests of Bya, are coming here to see them off," they answered.
>
> At that, the Lord lay down across the very path on which they were about to come, and remained there with a yogic gaze. When they came, he did nothing whatsoever, and they had to turn to the side of the path. Some of them said, "He may have fainted or perhaps he is a fraud."
>
> After a little while [gTsang smyon] rose up and started to walk. There were watchdogs tied up facing one another at the door, but he just went directly inside without caring about them. There he encountered the Venerable Kun dga' bzang mo, dPal 'chi med grub pa and Bya pa bKra shis dar rgyas surrounded by a large entourage, seated in rows and eating.
>
> The Lord entered the rows and went in turn to each person saying, "Pour me an offering of food!" The Bya pa poured him all he had and the Lord humbly said, "An excellent connection."
>
> The Venerable Lady had a boiled heart on her table, and suddenly [gTsang smyon] took it, and ate it. The Venerable Lady said, "the young monk seems hungry." "Not only am I hungry, but I also want to fuck you," [gTsang smyon] replied.
>
> 'Chi med pa asked, "What kind of qualities do you possess to act in this manner?" "I know the glorious Hevajra," [gTsang smyon] answered. The Venerable Lady said, "Well then, it is said 'Do not be attached to pleasant or unpleasant discursive thoughts', what does this mean?"
>
> The Lord said, "It is saying that one should neither have attachment toward a beautiful woman like you, nor feel disgust towards one who is leprous." 'Chi med pa blinked to the Venerable Lady and said, "To carry out that kind of conduct one must know the 'Chapter of Conduct', so bring it forth!"
>
> The Lord replied, "Poor young monk!" and gave a perfect explanation of the general outline of the Chapter of Conduct, backing it up with sections

[543] This is exemplified by the fact that Kun dga' bzang mo averted a Mongol invasion and performed many other demanding tasks early in life (Diemberger 2007: 247).
[544] Diemberger 2007: 79–80.

from other tantras. Afterwards he snapped his fingers and said, "Oh make your dharma-connection with that!"

Everyone was moved and obtained faith. dPal 'chi med grub pa said, "Outwardly, [he knows] reasoning and scripture, and the explanations of the tantras. Inwardly, he has the glory of experience and realization, and the disciplined conduct (*brtul zhugs*) of a yogin. At present, by his conduct of stamping on fear (*nyams nga thog rdzis kyi spyod pa*), he brings evidently good and bad circumstances onto the path. I rejoice at the existence of a yogin that is in harmony with the outer and inner signs, like a daytime star in this degenerate time." After saying [this he] folded his hands, closed his eyes and bowed with his head.

The Bya pa governor said, "It seems that he is a good yogin in agreement with the meaning."

dPal 'chi med grub pa said, "I have seen many a yogin, but apart from him [gTsang smyon] I have not seen a yogin that is in agreement with [both] inner and outer signs [before]."

Those who had assembled there [developed] great confidence, and praised the good qualities of the Lord, the great mighty yogin. They energetically proclaimed his greatness in all directions and especially the Bya pa myriarch became very devoted and said, "If you stay in rTsa ri (Tsāri) I will provide practice-provision."

"Food is a very kind (thing to give), [so] give me that," [gTsang smyon answered]. [gTsang smyon] promised to visit Chos rgyal lhun po[545] in the autumn.[546]

The episode cited above is typical in many ways; gTsang smyon's bizarre way of dressing and his provocative way of acting and speaking appear clearly in it. Similar stories are told repeatedly in the *rnam thars*. gTsang smyon often walked directly up to important persons and took their food or drink. This he did despite the guards and followers of the king or leader, who often became paralyzed by his charisma and spiritual powers and were therefore unable to stop him. The reaction that his provocations evoked differed; sometimes people tried to kill him, and at other times he was respected. Regardless of what kind of reaction his unusual ways gave rise to, it probably made him remembered and talked about. The many provocations and bizarre stories that filled his life, especially the ten-year period after he left dPal 'khor chos sde, constitute an important part of gTsang smyon's career. It was through acting in strange and provocative ways that he laid the foundation for future success it seems.

The support from the myriarch of Bya, bKra shis dar rgyas, made his further activities in the Tsāri area easier. When gTsang smyon and his brother came to the monastery bDe chen gling in Bya in the summer, the master in

[545] Chos rgyal lhun po was the residence of the Bya family in Dol (van der Kuijp 2006: 22) and as already mentioned it was the capital of the Bya myriarchy.
[546] G: 32–33. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1. Stearns [Kalnins] has also translated the first part of this section and I have followed her translation closely (Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 27–29).

charge, Chos rgyal dpal bzang, had been forewarned about gTsang smyon and his unusual ways.[547] The myriarch of Bya had written a letter to him with the following message: "This yogin [gTsang smyon] has a very rude conduct, ask him questions."[548]

Chos rgyal dpal bzang did as the myriarch had advised and was impressed by gTsang smyon's answers. Having ascertained that gTsang smyon was an accomplished yogin, devotion arose in the mind of the master. One day the Dharma Lord Chos rgyal dpal bzangs said:

> "Since you are a yogin who has obtained perfection and I have planned to build a protector chapel here, you need to pacify the ground and set the auspicious connection and so on."
>
> The Lord answered, "Since this would benefit the teachings and the living beings of course I will do it."
>
> Then the Lord went to a slaughtering place. He filled intestines with blood and [with these he] made ornaments for his hands and feet. He held some fresh hearts and lungs in his hands and smeared all of his body with blood. Then, performing the monastic dance of the "walking vajra" he went [to the place that was to be inaugurated]. In a completely perfect [manner] he performed the Vajrakīlaya-monastic dances of pacifying the ground and later he concealed the hearts, lungs, and so on, in the earth at the center of the [place where the] protector chapel [was to be constructed]. Then he commanded the Dharma Protectors, "In the future this place should be controlled by the power of the Guardians."[549]

This story illustrates how gTsang smyon performed rituals in a quite literal way that must have amazed and shocked people who saw him; what others visualized while reciting the liturgy, gTsang smyon sometimes acted out. He thereby "became" the wrathful deity that he invoked in the ritual, and he dressed, danced and behaved as such.

The next stage of their trip towards Tsāri was undertaken in the autumn, and once again gTsang smyon received an opportunity "to enter into the action" (*spyod pa la gshegs pa*) and display eccentric behavior. This time gTsang smyon and his brother traveled together with his supporter and benefactor, the Myriarch of Bya, bKra shis dar rgyas. "Patron and priest" (*yon mchod*) thus joined company for a while, but gTsang smyon soon decided that the myriarch and his retinue should go on ahead. Without the company of his powerful companions, gTsang smyon arrived at a mountain pass where a crowd of people had gathered. He went right into the crowd and started to jump around among the people. His provocative ways made the people in the gathering very angry and they tried to kill him by means of

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547 Only dNgos grub dpal 'bar mentions the name of the monastery (N: 9a). rGod tshang ras pa mentions that they arrived there in the summer (G: 33). Chos rgyal dpal bzang are called Chos skyabs dpal bzang by dNgos grub dpal 'bar (N: 99).

548 G: 33. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

549 G: 34. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

sticks and knives. gTsang smyon did not die, however, and the people had to resort to other means to end his life.

> They tied his hands and feet on his back and threw him into a terrifying crevice of a glacier.
>
> That night he stayed [in the crevice] and because [gTsang smyon] performed *gtum mo*-meditation, the glacier for about one fathom around his body melted. The following morning he walked on.[550]

gTsang smyon thus demonstrated his supernatural powers and his mastery of the yoga of inner heat (*gtum mo*).

After this incident gTsang smyon arrived at the Wisdom Wheel of Tsāri where the vajra master Su ru kha mtha' and Jo bzangs, together with male and females disciples (*nya ma*) and mountain people (*ri pa*) had gathered.[551] gTsang smyon entered the crowd...

> ...alternatingly eating from a sugar-cane that he held in his right hand and feces that he held in his left, he threw urine on everyone, beat some people, and so on. Despite all the unsuitable actions he performed, everyone was subdued by the splendour of his appearance and became devoted. Then they gave [gTsang smyon] the name "Hero of rTsa ri" (Tsāri) and he became famous.[552]

It is interesting and perhaps surprising that rGod tshang ras pa states that the very bizarre and provocative behavior of his teacher did not make people angry on this particular occasion. How can holding feces and throwing urine on people make them devoted? The reason for this might be that the readers (or listeners) of the *rnam thar* were supposed to know that an accomplished yogin could, and at a certain stage in his spiritual career perhaps should, behave in unusual and outrageous ways. If they did not know it, the *rnam thar*s about gTsang smyon provide them with this lesson. gTsang smyon's extreme behavior is therefore not a fault, but rather serves as a proof of gTsang smyon's extraordinary qualities. The courage and freedom from constraints that this kind of behavior requires was regarded as signs of his accomplishment rather than of his shortcomings.[553]

Meditation Practice

> In the remote solitary place called Tiger's Den,
> for the sake of exhorting [your] disciples to practise vigorously,

[550] G: 34. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.
[551] G: 34; N: 9a.
[552] G: 34–35. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.
[553] dNgos grub dpal 'bar states that he received the name Tsa ri pa and not rTsa ri dpa' bo (N: 9a). As mentioned, the spelling of Tsāri varies in different sources.

[You dwelled] one pointedly in the state of meditative absorption (*samādhi*), evenly equipoised.
I bow down to you—King of the steadfast sages.[554]

Having described gTsang smyon's outrageous behavior, the *rnam thars* shift focus for a while and explain how gTsang smyon practised meditation with great diligence. The biographers point out in particular how he endured great hardships while practising. The emphasis on meditation practice, diligence, and the ability to endure hardships, are generally important components in Buddhist hagiographies. The message that is being conveyed in the life stories is that realization can not be attained without diligence and hardships, and also that the sense of the words and theories will never be understood without practising what has been studied. Practice in this context usually refers to meditation, the third part of the triad: listening (*thos*), reflecting (*bsam*) and meditating (*sgom*), although it also can refer to the actions performed between meditation periods. gTsang smyon had already perfected the listening and reflecting part of the path, but the meditation and practice part of the path towards enlightenment needed to be accomplished as well.

In the three *rnam thars*, a similar description of how gTsang smyon practised meditation is given. Despite the similarities, there are differences however, dNgos grub dpal 'bar gives a very brief account while rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun give a more detailed description.[555] Both rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun agree that gTsang smyon stayed for three years in Tsāri meditating but they give different names to the place where he stayed. Lha btsun mentions that he stayed at sTag tshang (Tiger's Den) and rGod tshang ras pa that he stayed at gTsang pa spang chung.[556] All three authors mention that he practised very intensively, day and night, for six months. However, it seems a bit unclear if gTsang smyon practised in isolation during the whole three-year period, or if he sometimes left his meditation place. dNgos grub dpal 'bar only mentions the six month period, and according to him gTsang smyon mainly practised the Secret Conduct of Nāropa (*Nāro gsang spyod*) during the six months.[557] This does not necessarily contradict rGod tshang ras pa's and Lha btsun's accounts, however, since they also describe a six-

[554] L: 19: *stag tshang zhes bya bgrod dka'i dben gnas su / gdul bya sgrub la brtson par bskul ba'i phyir / mnyam gzhag ting 'dzin ngang la rtse gcig tu / g.yo med drang srong rgyal po khyod la 'dud /.*

[555] N: 9a–9b; G: 35–36; L: 19–23. It is hard to decide when the section that describes gTsang smyon's meditation period ends in the *rnam thars*. Visions and actions of various kinds are described, and some of these probably occurred during his meditation retreat and formed a part of it. I will return to these visions and some of the actions gTsang smyon undertook in Tsāri and give references to them. At this point I will describe only the period spent in strict meditation.

[556] Small Meadow of gTsang pa. G: 35; L: 19. It is possible that the name is derived from gTsang smyon, and thus means "Small Meadow of the Man of gTsang," i.e. gTsang smyon.

[557] N: 9a. gTsang smyon later wrote a commentary to this practice. See the section on gTsang smyon's own works in Chapter 9.

month period of extremely intensive meditation practice within the three-year retreat.[558] The retreat ended with a series of visionary encounters that were very important for gTsang smyon. During the three years in Tsāri, gTsang smyon seem to have had at least two companions who assisted him, at least to begin with. rGod tshang ras pa mentions that gTsang smyon's brother, mKon mchog rgyal mtshan, and a yogin called "the bearded one of gTsang" (gTsang pa rgya'o) were with him.[559] The three-year retreat of gTsang smyon seems to have been quite different from the formal, structured and organized three-year retreats that are performed these days.[560] Just like his prototype, Milarepa, he stayed in a remote area in the wilderness, and the way he practised seems to have been governed by his own intuition and the visions he encountered, rather than by rules or spiritual guidance from a retreat master.

Since the information provided in the *rnam thars* about gTsang smyon's three-year retreat is rather scarce and somewhat heterogeneous, we have to make certain assumptions. As mentioned above he probably stayed in Tsāri for three years, perhaps at the same place, or at least in the same area. During this period, he spent about six months practising day and night without leaving his meditation cave. In what follows I will first summarize some parts of the account of gTsang smyon's meditation retreat in Tsāri as depicted by Lha btsun, and then in conclusion cite rGod tshang ras pa's account at length.

Lha btsun begins his account with a description of gTsang smyon's thoughts before beginning his retreat. He describes how gTsang smyon recalled the example of the historical Buddha, Nāropa, and Milarepa, and reflected upon the way in which his lineage—the practice lineage—had been transmitted previously.[561] Emphasizing the extraordinary efforts and hardships the early lineage holders had endured, gTsang smyon first thought about how the historical Buddha, prior to his enlightenment, had spent six years of asceticism on the bank of a river.[562] Then the Indian Siddha Nāropa came to his mind. Despite having mastered the five branches of knowledge before meeting Tilopa, Nāropa followed his lama and suffered many hardships for a period of twelve years.[563] Finally, gTsang smyon thought about

[558] The impression when reading dNgos grub dpal 'bar's text is that he stayed for six months during the winter, and then in the spring he still practised in Tsāri but left his retreat cave to engage in action (*spyod pa*) again (N: 9a–9b).
[559] G: 35.
[560] For a description of the many practices that are traditionally carried out during a three-year retreat, see Kongtrul's *Retreat Manual*. Kongtrul also outlines the discipline and motivation that a participant in a retreat should have (Kongtrul 1994).
[561] L: 19. According to Dan Martin, "practice lineage" (*sgrub brgyud*) refers to a lineage "in which practical accomplishment in religion is given priority over interpretation and study" (Martin 1996: 33).
[562] L: 19.
[563] L: 19. The five branches of knowledge (*rig pa'i gnas lnga*) usually refer to the five major branches of knowledge (*rig gnas che ba lnga*). According to the Padma Karpo Translation

Milarepa who had made a vow to practise for as long as he lived. He recalled how Milarepa had carried out his lama, Marpa's, every command. "I must also carry out hardships with great diligence and obtain the supreme accomplishment in this very life," gTsang smyon thought to himself.[564]

Having made a great resolve to follow in the footsteps of the spiritual ancestors of his lineage and to carry out the command of his lama, gTsang smyon began his retreat. rGod tshang ras pa describes how gTsang smyon performed the essential practices with "a diligence that resembled someone trying to extinguish a burning fire on his head."[565]

Lha btsun describes how gTsang smyon's two companions, frightened by the many wild animals that roamed the remote mountain wilderness, left him after only a couple of days.[566] They left some food for him to sustain himself on, but after some time the food ran out and he had to rely on water. Lha btsun also describes how snow fell for twelve days and blocked the entrance to his meditation cave. The snow forced gTsang smyon to remain inside his cave for seven months.[567] During this period, he sustained himself on water and had only some leaves to sit on. Eventually even the leaves were worn out, and he had to continue his meditation practice sitting directly on a slab of stone on the floor of his cave. When his practice started to bear fruit, the lower part of his body was full of wounds and he was on the edge of starvation. Lha btsun describes how his intense meditation practice led to a mastery of the inner yogic practices. Having gained control over the subtle channels (*rtsa*) and the subtle energies (*rlung*) and the drops (*thig le*) everything started to shine forth as co-emergent wisdom of great bliss.[568] Although his physical condition was very bad, he managed to remain inwardly undisturbed in his meditative concentration.[569]

During his strict meditation retreat, gTsang smyon had several dreams and visions that had a profound impact on him and guided him through the hardships he faced.[570] After five months of intensive practice, gTsang smyon

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Committee these five are: 1) *nang gi rig pa* "science of inner (development)"; 2) *gtan tshigs kyi rig pa* "science of logic"; 3) *sgra'i rig pa* "knowledge/science of sounds (comprised of the knowledge of unarticulated and articulated sounds, the latter of which is the science of grammar)"; 4) *gso ba'i rig pa* "science of healing"; 5) *bzo gnas kyi rig pa*, "science of fabrication" (The Padma Karpo Translation Committee 2003).

564 L: 19–20: *nga rang yang dka' bcad brtson 'grus drag pos tshe 'dir mchog gi dngos grub thob par byed dgos dgongs /.*

565 G: 36. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

566 As will be seen below, rGod tshang ras pa's account differs and he does not mention that gTsang smyon was alone during his meditation retreat in Tsāri. However, both rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun focus on the many difficulties and hardships gTsang smyon encountered during his meditation retreat.

567 L: 20.

568 L: 21.

569 L: 21.

570 Lha btsun mentions several visions, dreams and meditative experiences that are not mentioned by dNgos grub dpal 'bar and rGod tshang ras pa.

had a vivid dream of his root lama, Sha ra ba, sitting in the way of the great Brahmin, Saraha.[571] Sha ra ba was surrounded by many ḍākinīs and performed a huge *gaṇacakra* and, when gTsang smyon thought that he should join the feast, he woke up.[572] The dream resulted in great progress in his meditation.

Another time the ḍākinī Ku ru ku le appeared carrying a crystal vase with wisdom nectar. The nectar filled gTsang smyon and he was purified inwardly and outwardly.[573]

Then, the great Brahmin, Saraha, appeared in a dream. When gTsang smyon woke up, he went to the place that he had seen in the dream. Arriving at the place that had been indicated, he found a pile of vomit and other filth. He ate it all up and entered into a state of meditative absorption that lasted for two months.[574]

Another night gTsang smyon dreamt about a beautiful young woman amidst rainbow light. She told him that he had to trample on all appearances[575] and that he needed an extraordinary substance in order to obtain the highest accomplishments. After the woman had disappeared gTsang smyon remained in a state of luminosity, pondering whether such an extraordinary substance was available or not. As he thought about it he fell asleep again and in his dream, another woman, red in colour, naked, adorned with bone ornaments, and a bit wrathful, appeared. She said, "'gTsang pa Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan, if you want to obtain the highest accomplishments in this life come here immediately! Come here now!' After having said so she disappeared like a rainbow."[576]

Having awakened from the dreams, gTsang smyon started to think about their meaning and concluded that it was a message from the wisdom ḍākinīs. He went out and started to search for the extraordinary substance that the ḍākinīs had talked about. After a while he saw a crow encircling something nearby and hurried to the spot below. There he found the corpse of a seventeen-year-old leper girl. He broke open the skull of the corpse and ate some brains.[577] He also mentally offered some of it to his own lama, Sha ra ba, and to other bKa' brgyud lamas, some he offered to Vajravārāhī and other *yidams*, and some to Siṃhavakrā (Seng gdong) and other protectors. Inexhaustible bliss burned and co-emergent wisdom arose in his mind and he

[571] As mentioned above Sha ra ba was believed to be an emanation of the Indian siddha Saraha. For a study of the importance of Saraha in dreams and visions among Tibetan masters, see Schaeffer 2005.
[572] L: 21.
[573] L: 21–22.
[574] L: 22–23.
[575] *sNang ba la thog rdzis byas.*
[576] L: 23: *gtsang pa sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan tshe 'dir mchog gi dngos grub thob par 'dod na da lta rang song da lta rang song zer nas 'ja' ltar yal song /.*
[577] A Tibetan lama, with whom I discussed this episode, emphasized that it is important to consider that gTsang smyon was starving when he performed this action.

said, "Delusion is the creative play of primordial wisdom, free from the primary cause [of] grasping [at] manifestations. This very body [is] emptiness [and] dependent arising. The bliss of the three worlds is born spontaneously!"[578]

Having danced upon the corpse of the young leper woman he returned to his meditation cave. He sat in meditation posture, the inner winds (*rlung*) melted into the central channel, and he experienced emptiness and clarity. In his meditation, he saw how the beings in hell suffer from heat and cold, how the hungry ghosts suffer from hunger and thirst, and how the animals suffer from mental blindness and from eating one another.[579] A limitless compassion arose and he prayed to his lama, the Dharma Lord Sha ra ba, whom he visualized as sitting on top of his head. Light radiated from Sha ra ba's body and purified the different kinds of suffering that the beings of the three lower realms experience and they became settled in the happiness of gods and humans. The humans and gods in turn became liberated from suffering as well, and reached a state of meditative absorption. For seven days gTsang smyon remained in the "meditative absorption that dries up the ocean of samsaric suffering."[580]

As already mentioned, rGod tshang ras pa describes the periods of practice a bit differently. To conclude the section of gTsang smyon's meditation practice I will therefore cite rGod tshang ras pa's account at length.

> Then, from that summer and onwards, [gTsang smyon] stayed in gTsang pa spang chung. For three years he stayed in that holy place without departing, and in particular he did not leave his cave [at all] for [a period of] six months. Not letting his meditation belt part from his posture, dividing [the twenty-four hours] into six periods of meditation.
>
> Moreover, in essence, he never moved from the even equipoise of Mahāmudrā, and in form, [he remained] in the state of the clarity [of] the support and the supported—the maṇḍala of the *yi dam* deity Hevajra—like an image reflected in a mirror.[581] In addition, during the four periods (*thun*)—the early part of the night, the early morning before daybreak, early morning and the late part of the night—he meditated solely on *gtum mo*.[582]
>
> During the noon session he took a little break and [dwelled] in the state of clear-light (*'od gsal*) and sometimes he extended [this session] a bit. All other

[578] L: 24: *'phrul 'dzin gzhi rtsa bral ba la / 'phrul snang ye shes rol rtsed yin / rten 'brel stong nyid rang gzugs 'di / khams gsum bde chen lhan skyes dang /.*

[579] L: 25.

[580] L: 25: *sdug bsngal gyi rgya mtsho skam par byas snyam pa'i ting nge 'dzin.*

[581] mKhan po Ngag dbang rdo rje explains that this means that gTsang smyon combined the two stages of practice (the developing and completion phases).

[582] The twenty-four hours are divided into six periods, and these periods are used for meditation practice. 1) *tho rangs* early morning before daybreak; 2) *snga dro* early morning; 3) *nyin gung* mid to late morning; 4) *phyi dro* afternoon; 5) *srod* early part of the night; 6) *nam gung* late part of the night to midnight (Padma Karpo Translation Committee 2003, *The Illuminator Tibetan-English Encyclopedic Dictionary*).

periods he only practised Hevajra.[583] His brother served him food, and [gTsang smyon] meditated day and night without falling astray.

The Bearded Man of gTsang (gTsang pa rgya'o) said, "As each day passes nothing comes out of your darkness retreat.[584] It would be better if you walked a bit and [used] your feet. In this wet place with bad water, you will become crippled or hunchbacked. Is that what you want?"

Even though [gTsang pa rgya'o] said this repeatedly, [gTsang smyon] did not listen and endured [in his practice] day and night. About five months went by and because of the wind of meditation, the bad water and not relaxing his posture, pus gathered in the hollow of his knees. Despite becoming very sick he endeavoured for [some][585] months.

Then the illness became even worse and the pain was so strong that it was almost unbearable to retract his legs. It even became necessary to help [gTsang smyon] to perform his daily activities. One day when his brother was not there, the work of serving the sick [gTsang smyon] was entrusted to the Bearded Man of gTsang.

He (the Bearded Man of gTsang) said, "This all happened because he [gTsang smyon] did not listen to me."

He (the Bearded Man of gTsang) [went] to [gTsang smyon's] dwelling place, and with a terrible force made the pus of the legs came out. The following day [gTsang smyon] was almost able to perform his yogic exercises.

Then by endeavouring in bodily training (*sku sbyongs*) [gTsang smyon] was liberated from his indisposition. Holding a bamboo stick as he walked an imprint of the stick appeared on the stone floor.

Then once more, as before [gTsang smyon] focused solely on [his] practice, day and night, without being distracted for even a moment.[586]

After having emphasized how gTsang smyon practised meditation and asceticism with great diligence, the hagiographers turn to the next important phase of gTsang smyon's spiritual career, his enlightenment or his "complete liberation" (*rnam par thar pa*).

Chos kyi grags pa becomes Khrag 'thung rgyal po – The Heruka is Born

I bow down to you who erected the victory banner of accomplishment in the three holy mountain-places.
Especially in the great holy place Tsa ri ṭa, Hevajra took care of you, and you received prophecies from the lamas and wisdom ḍākinīs.[587]

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[583] *dGes pa rdo rje'i snyen pa. sNyen pa* is a technical term in the Vajrayāna practice. It is a part of the development phase of tantric meditation practice (*bskyed rim, utpattikrama*) where the practitioner, by means of mantra recitation and visualizations, approaches the deity.
[584] *Mun mtshams.*
[585] The text is illegible here so it is not possible to see how long he endeavoured.
[586] G: 35–36. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.
[587] N: 1b. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 2.

By the end of his Tsāri retreat, gTsang smyon had a particularly important vision that outshone the many previous visions he had had in his life. This vision eventually became known as his "secret life story" (*gsang ba'i rnam thar*). According to dNgos grub dpal 'bar and rGod tshang ras pa, gTsang smyon did not tell anyone about this vision until the very end of his life. dNgos grub dpal 'bar describes how gTsang smyon decided to reveal the profound vision to his close disciples on the 13th day of the fifth Hor month 1507, two days before he passed away.[588]

Lha btsun depicts the important vision and quotes the so-called secret life story in which the vision is described in the section that describes gTsang smyon's first stay in Tsāri.[589] According to Lha btsun, the vision thus occurred immediately after parting with Sha ra ba, before gTsang smyon studied in dPal 'khor chos sde. Lha btsun instead describes two other visionary encounters of importance that gTsang smyon had during his second stay in Tsāri, and since they are somewhat similar, at least in function, they will be mentioned briefly before continuing with the secret life story.

gTsang smyon had the first vision in a remote place in Tsāri that was full of wild and dangerous animals.[590] Cakrasaṃvara appeared and gTsang smyon received the four empowerments directly from him and he was given the secret name bZhad pa rdo rje.[591] On a later occasion, gTsang smyon went to the Turquoise Lake[592] in Tsāri where he encountered Vajravārāhī who urged him to compose *The Outline of the Adamantine Verses that Dispels the Darkness of Ignorance*.[593] Encouraged by the vision he thus composed his first text at this point, according to Lha btsun.[594]

Neither rGod tshang ras pa nor dNgos grub dpal 'bar mention these visions, but they both mention that the vision that was to become known as gTsang smyon's secret life story occurred at the end of his second stay in Tsāri. I will follow the chronology suggested by them and present it here.

rGod tshang ras pa devotes the seventh chapter of the *Heart of the Sun* to this vision and its aftermath, and he summarizes the content of the chapter as follows: "How [gTsang smyon] was assisted by the *yi dam* and perfected his experience and realization."[595] At the beginning of the chapter he describes the vision in the following way:

[588] N: 25b.
[589] L: 14–15.
[590] The place is called Dom tshang gnas (The Bear Nest Place) L: 27.
[591] L: 28. It should be noted that bZhad pa rdo rje is the name of Milarepa.
[592] g.Yu mtsho.
[593] *rDo rje tshig rkang gi sa bcad ma rig mun sel*. L: 29. This text is gTsang smyon's outline and explanation of the *rDo rje tshig rkang* and it was later included in gTsang smyon's Aural Transmission compilation (for a description of this compilation, see Chapter 9).
[594] L: 31.
[595] G: 11: *yid dam lha yis rje su bzung zhing nyams rtogs mthar phyin pa'i le'u.*

During the night of the twenty-ninth day [gTsang smyon] met with the incomparable Sha ra ba and because of the power [that arose, gTsang smyon] clearly saw the maṇḍala and the deities of the Bhagavat Hevajra who bestowed the four empowerments completely and perfectly. [Then Hevajra] gave [gTsang smyon] the secret name Khrag 'thung rgyal po.[596]

The detailed description of the vision does not occur until the end of rGod tshang ras pa's and dNgos grub dpal 'bar's *rnam thar*s, but for the sake of chronological consistency his secret life story will be presented at this point:

I bow down to the guru, De wa and Ḍa ki.

When I stayed at the great holy place of rTsa ri (Tsāri), the whole ground below was covered with blood, fat, and grease, and in the middle of nine frightening and dreadful groups of harmful human corpses sat the unequalled Precious One [Sha ra ba]. I decided that I should request empowerment from him and offered two squares of red silk as an empowerment-gift. I kneeled with folded hands and as I looked at the maṇḍala-face of the lama I saw that the precious Lord seemed extremely frightened. He was looking at something behind me and I also turned to see what the lama was looking at.

A huge frightening skeleton with nine heads and eighteen arms approached and it was chasing me. I became extremely scared and tried to run away. But the skeleton caught me and then it swallowed me.

At that very moment I came to a divine palace. It had the architecture of the supreme god, the king Hevajra, and it was filled with sons and daughters of the gods. They spoke with clear voices and understood the meaning.

I decided to request empowerments from the king (Hevajra). I went down on my knees, with folded hands, and supplicated him.

The king (Hevajra) bestowed general and special *samaya*s and vows to me. [Then] at the time of Vase Empowerment, the king conferred it with a vase; at the time of Secret Empowerment, he gave me a skull full of white and red bodhicitta; at the time of Wisdom-knowledge [Empowerment], he held the hand of a daughter of the gods and gave [her] to me; at the time of Word Empowerment, he held a vajra and bell in his two hands and with his right hand in the threatening mudra position[597] he pointed at my heart, saying, "This wisdom is extremely subtle" and other phrases.

A complete understanding of the meaning of the four empowerments arose and I [realized that I] had obtained empowerment from the bhagavan, the glorious Hevajra, in person.

E waṃ![598]

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[596] G: 36. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

[597] *sDigs mdzub*, the mudra of pointing with one's right forefinger and little finger.

[598] G: 272–273, L 14–15, N 25b–26b: *na mo gu ru de wa ḍa ki ni / kho bo gnas chen rtsa ri (tsā ri) na yod pa'i dus su / 'og gi sa gzhi thams cad khrag zhag klad pas khyab cing / mi gdug pa'i ro'i tshogs dgu'i dbus 'jigs shing skyi g.ya' ba'i nang na / nyam med rin po che bzhugs 'dug pa la / dbang zhu bsam pas / gos chen dmar po kha do sbrel cig dbang yon du phul / sku drung du dpus mo btsugs thal mo sbyar nas / bla ma'i zhal ras kyi dkyil 'khor la lta zhing yod tshe / rje rin po che yang shin du 'jigs 'jigs 'dra ba'i tshul gyis / kho bo'i rgyab phyogs na phar la gzigs shing 'dug pa la / ngas kyang bla ma gzigs phyogs la ltas pas / keng*

That this vision was regarded as very important is shown by several factors. First of all, the three *rnam thar*s quote it verbatim. Secondly, it is gTsang smyon's secret life story (*gsang ba'i rnam thar*) and as such believed to contain his most significant dreams and visions.[599]

The vision of Hevajra was in fact a final affirmation of gTsang smyon's success in Hevajra practice. As seen above, Sha ra ba had told gTsang smyon that he should take Hevajra as his main *yidam*, and after parting from his root lama, also according to his lama's command, he studied the *Hevajra Tantra* in dPal 'khor chos sde. It has also been mentioned that it was a visionary encounter with the eight female divinities, or consorts, of Hevajra that led gTsang smyon to start the unconventional behavior that led to his departure from the monastery. It is also often described that gTsang smyon impressed people with his expertise in the *Hevajra Tantra*, and we have seen how gTsang smyon referred to its chapter of conduct when dPal 'chi med grub pa questioned him about his provocative behavior.[600] Then, after having spent three years meditating on Hevajra in Tsāri he had obviously removed the last remaining traces of seperation from his *yidam*, and from then on he "became" Hevajra in human form. This realization was confirmed by Hevajra himself who granted the four tantric empowerments in their entirety to gTsang smyon and gave him the secret name Khrag 'thung rgyal po.[601] The name Khrag 'thung rgyal po actually means "King of the Blood Drinkers", and "Blood Drinker" (*khrag 'thung*) is a Tibetan equivalent of Sanskrit *heruka*. Heruka is the general name given to semi-wrathful and wrathful male *yidam*s of the higher tantras, and the vision of Hevajra/Heruka may be seen as the actual "birth of the heruka".[602] gTsang smyon had perfected his studies and meditation and became a perfected one—a siddha (*grub thob*). His be-

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rus chen po dbu dgu phyag bco brgyad pa 'jigs su rung ba cig gis ded byung pas / 'jigs drags bros phyin pas / keng rus kyis nga bzung nas khyur mid la gsol bas / de'i mod la smra shes / don go / lha'i bu dang bu mos gang ba'i rgyal po dges pa rdo rje bla med kyi lha'i cha chad can zhig gis byed kyin 'dug pa'i lha'i gzhal yas khang zhig tu sleb pas / rgyal po de la dbang zhu bsam nas sku drung du dpus mo btsugs thal mo sbyar ste gsol ba btab pas / rgyal pos dam tshig sdom pa spyi dang bye drag rnams gnang zhing / bum dbang gi skabs su / rgyal pos bum pa'i dbang bskur / gsang dbang gi skabs su thod pa byang sems dkar dmar gyis bkang ba gnang zhing / shes rab ye shes kyi skabs su / lha'i bu mo cig gi lag nas bzung ste / kho bo la gnang / tshig dbang gi skabs su / phyag gnyis rdo rje dril bu 'dzin pa las/ g.yas sdigs 'dzub (mdzub) dang bcas pa kho bo'i snying khar btsugs te / ye shes 'di ni ches phra zhing / ces sogs kyi tshigs bcad rnams gsungs pas / dbang bzhi'i don la go ba mtha' dag chags pa yin zhing / bcom ldan 'das dpal dges pa rdo rje la dbang dngos su thob par 'dod pa yin no / e wam //.

599 Gyatso 1998: 104; Quintman 2006: 11. See also the discussion in Chapter 2 about the different *rnam thar* categories (pp. 36–37).

600 See above (pp. 107–108).

601 It should be noted that only rGod tshang ras pa mentions that gTsang smyon received the name from Hevajra after the vision. dNgos grub dpal 'bar does not mention it, and Lha btsun mentions that he received the name on a later occasion (L: 34–37).

602 A more thorough exposition of Tantric Buddhism and also of heruka will be given in Chapter 8.

havior and way of looking also resembled Indian siddhas, such as Tilopa and Nāropa, rather than monks, such as Atiśa and sGam po pa.

The day after he received the empowerment from Hevajra, gTsang smyon's brother was shown the corpse of a woman who had died of small-pox on the bank of a river south of the Bya 'phur sgang (Flying Bird Hill).[603] dKon mchog rgyal mtshan (gTsang smyon's brother) told gTsang smyon about the corpse and gTsang smyon left his strict retreat. Instead of shunning the potentially contagious and therefore dangerous body, gTsang smyon's brother removed the upper part of the head of the corpse and offered it to gTsang smyon. gTsang smyon blessed everyone who was present on the occasion with it and...

> Most of the people obtained ordinary accomplishments (*thun mong gi dngos grub*); those who wanted children but previously could not get [children] obtained children; those who were sick were liberated from their diseases; those who wanted wealth obtained wealth; those with disabled sense faculties regained the sharpness of their senses, and so on.[604]

This incident was yet another example that shows how gTsang smyon engaged in activities that ordinary people dread. What would have been polluting and dangerous for a normal person was transformed into something beneficial and purifying. Instead being infected with small-pox, they received blessing and good fortune by means of the corpse.

gTsang smyon had now reached his goal and rGod tshang ras pa devotes the rest of the chapter to describing his attainment:

> From that point onwards, all the conceptual structures of the rational mind—the understanding and the experience—of the Lord were liberated into their own condition. All that is grasped and the grasping itself dissolved into space; the meditation and the meditator parted from the rational mind; the meaning that is neither bondage nor liberation manifested; samsara and nirvana mixed into one; and the knowledge of non-action naturally was established. The dividing line between meditation and post-meditation was thus erased. Knowledge of things as they are, and of all that exists, completely overflowed [gTsang smyon's mind], and the five wisdoms were beyond clarification, obscuration and interruption. All the knots of the subtle channels were liberated and purified in the central channel. [...]
>
> The stages of the paths arose, and regardless of high and low, all at once, he traversed all the levels and paths, at one [and the same] time. The ten powers, distinctly and without fear, the greatness of the Buddha, the inexhaustible wheel of ornamentation, and so on, all qualities of the Victorious One were perfected without effort. At this time [gTsang smyon] realized the mind of the all-pervasive Lord, Vajradhara, the personification of the five wisdoms and the four bodies.

[603] dNgos grub dpal 'bar states that it was in the spring that gTsang smyon was shown the corpse, and he says nothing about the reason for the woman's death (N: 9b).
[604] G: 36. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1. Compare with N: 9b.

> This was the seventh chapter and it was about how the *yidam*-deities assisted [gTsang smyon and about how] the clear-light of the mother mixed with the son. [Moreover, it explained how] the sun of the four bodies and five wisdoms shone in the primordial sky.[605]

gTsang smyon was now enlightened, and it was time to work for the sake of all the beings who suffer in samsara. It is to this important phase of his spiritual career that we will now turn.

[605] G: 36–37. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

Chapter 6: The Mad Yogin

> I bow down to your deeds of perfecting the conduct. When you knew it was time for action, you adorned yourself with charnel-ground ornaments, and by the disciplined conduct of trampling upon (*thog rdzis*) [and] equalization of taste (*ro snyoms*) you subdued the four elements, poisons, weapons, bad persons, walking corpses and the like.[606]

This chapter deals with the period of gTsang smyon's life that started when the twenty-four year old yogin "became a heruka," and lasted until his early thirties. During this period gTsang smyon practised "disciplined conduct" and wandered around as a mad yogin, often behaving provocatively and seemingly mad. Having been born, the time was now ripe for the Heruka to "enter into the action" and, as already seen, he often did so in gatherings of people, or in front of kings and leaders.

The Sobriquet: gTsang smyon – The Madman of gTsang – is Given

After his enlightenment gTsang smyon had the following thought: "Now, since I have completely reached the end of accomplishing my own purpose, it is time to work for the sake of others."[607]

He then entered into a meditative trance that enabled him to clearly perceive the three times (past, present and future) and with the eye of wisdom he saw how people in the degenerate times suffer from both outer problems—such as diseases and poverty—and from inner disturbances—such as doubts, and wrong views. He also saw that it was difficult to help beings due to their many afflictions and shortcomings. In order to truly bring benefit to humans and other types of beings born under such difficult circumstances it is necessary to conceal one's own good qualities and practise disciplined conduct, he realized. "[I will] move in all directions and carefully conceal my supreme qualities, being in accordance with the common people, [I will]

[606] N: 1b. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 2.
[607] G: 37. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

establish a connection with virtue in the disciples of lower capacity," he thought to himself.[608]

It is interesting that gTsang smyon, according to rGod tshang ras pa, made a conscious decision to become the kind of person that others would soon call a madman (*smyon pa*). This he did in order to bring benefit to the beings of his time, and the unorthodox and often seemingly mad acts called "disciplined conduct" were done solely "to benefit the beings and the Buddhist doctrine" we are assured.[609] gTsang smyon also made a deliberate choice to become a "hidden yogin" (*sbas pa'i rnal 'byor*)[610] and by so doing he became able to teach people of a rough and irreligious nature that it would be hard to "tame" otherwise. His departure from Buddhist monasticism was thus based on an inner realization which arose from an altruistic mind. gTsang smyon's seemingly unorthodox behavior and strangeness were therefore in full accordance with Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine, his disciples assure us.

Although disciplined conduct and its many strange, provocative and seemingly mad activities had been performed by gTsang smyon several times after he left his monastery, the authors of the *rnam thar*s state that it was at this point, after his "enlightenment", that he began practising disciplined conduct on a wider scale. rGod tshang ras pa explains that the eighth chapter of the *Heart of the Sun* is about "how gTsang smyon roamed around the holy places and rugged charnel grounds and was completely victorious everywhere by means of practising disciplined conduct."[611] Also the verse by dNgos grub dpal 'bar that began this chapter describes this period of gTsang smyon's life, and it explains how he perfected the conduct and practised disciplined conduct. It was at this point in his spiritual career that gTsang smyon became a mad yogin, and the term disciplined conduct—*brtul zhugs*—is a key term that all the three *rnam thar*s use for the kind of conduct that he engaged in.[612]

The year of his enlightenment, which was the time when he definitely "entered into the conduct," is not mentioned in the texts. Given the fact that he was twenty-one when he left his monastery and went to Tsāri (according to Lha btsun), and then stayed there to practise for three years (according to

[608] G: 37. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.
[609] G: 37. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.
[610] When I talked about the reasons for the mad behavior of the mad yogins with bLo bzang thog med, the bKa' brgyud teacher at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Sārnāth, he told me that "a siddha sometimes acts like a madman so that the Tantrayāna will be kept secret" (1999-01-05).
[611] G: 11: *btul (brtul) zhugs kyi spyod pas gnas chen dang dur khrod gnyan sa rnams nyul zhing / phyogs thams cad las rnam par rgyal ba'i le'u.*
[612] This term will be further analyzed and described in Chapter 8.

both rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun), he was probably around twenty-four. This would mean that he became a full-fledged heruka in 1475.[613]

It was also at this time that the sobriquet under which he became known—gTsang smyon (the Madman of gTsang)—was first used according to rGod tshang ras pa. As was seen in Chapter 1, gTsang smyon went naked into a gathering in Tsāri, adorned with pieces of corpses and behaved very strangely. This he did after having thought about how he should "benefit the Buddhist doctrine and the beings" and the people who saw him, quite understandably, started to call him the Madman of gTsang. What might appear more unusual is that they revered him very much and that the sobriquet was used as a type of honorific.[614]

It should be noted that neither dNgos grub dpal 'bar nor Lha btsun mention the incident, and it is of course possible that people called him gTsang smyon earlier.[615] This was, as we have already seen, not the first time he behaved like a madman and it was definitely not the last time either.

Action

Before leaving Tsāri, gTsang smyon stayed in a cave that was connected with the Four Armed Protector. Although gTsang smyon's main protector was *Pañjaranātha* (Gur mgon)—a form of Mahākāla that is mainly associated with the Sa skya tradition—he wanted to establish a connection with the holy place. One night a black man appeared and started to fight with gTsang smyon. After a long and even fight the black man said: "I am the Four Armed Protector, I am also the protector of the Aural Transmission of the Ḍākinīs. Moreover I will be serving as your Dharma Protector, so erect some *gtor ma*s as well. Tomorrow a giver of a book containing my practices will also come."[616]

As predicted by the black man, who was an emanation of the Four Armed Protector, a man came the following day and handed over a text containing the rituals needed to propitiate the Four Armed Protector.[617] gTsang smyon thus changed his main protector and thereby became more thoroughly con-

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613 Lha btsun states that he was twenty-four (1475) when he was attacked by a group of tribal people (see below) and since this happened shortly after he became a heruka he probably was twenty-four (L: 32).

614 G: 37–38. For the full citation, see Chapter 1, p 7.

615 Lha btsun does mention that the name gTsang pa smyon pa was given to him before he left Tsāri, and he describes it differently (L: 25–27).

616 G: 38. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1. Lha btsun also relates that gTsang smyon stayed in a protector cave in Tsāri to propitiate the protectors with *gtor ma*s and rituals. Like rGod tshang ras pa, Lha btsun mentions that the Four Armed Wisdom Protector appeared in reality, but does not mention any fight between gTsang smyon and the protector. Another difference between the two accounts is that gTsang smyon's brother, dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, figures in Lha btsun's version (L: 31–32).

617 G: 38.

nected with the bKa' brgyud tradition in general and with its Aural Transmissions in particular.[618]

After having displayed his fearlessness and skill in disciplined conduct, gTsang smyon left Tsāri, and in the summer he went to gNyal,[619] an area situated north-west of Tsāri, directly west of Bya. The people of gNyal had united against Bya, and a civil war was raging between the two districts. gTsang smyon's benefactor, the governor (*nang so*) of Bya, bKra shis dar rgyas, and his subjects were seriously threatened, and gTsang smyon decided to help his benefactor out. He performed a ceremony on behalf of bKra shis dar rgyas after which the people of Bya started to defeat the armies of gNyal.[620] This made the leader of Bya and his subjects very grateful and devoted to the mad yogin. Having fulfilled his mission, gTsang smyon felt that he was no longer needed in Bya. He remembered that his lama had told him to roam the country with no fixed abode and to practise meditation at different remote and holy sites. Accompanied by his brother and sometimes by other persons as well,[621] he left Bya and his beloved Tsāri and started a long journey that actually did not end until his death in 1507. Sometimes he stayed at the same place for some years, but he never settled permanently anywhere. rGod tshang ras pa summarizes his lifestyle eloquently:

> Then once again, [gTsang smyon] departed in the manner of a madman. Without any provisions whatsoever, he wandered aimlessly, in all directions. Completely fearless—like a lion; without doubts—like an elephant craving water; free from clinging—like the leaves of a tree agitated by the wind.[622]

Miraculous Powers

> I bow down to you, for whom even a rain of weapons on the vajra-body shone forth as an illusory empty appearance.

[618] For a more detailed discussion about gTsang smyon's relation to the bKa' brgyud and Sa skya schools, see Larsson forthcoming a.

[619] Spelled dMyal by dNgos grub dpal 'bar and Lha btsun.

[620] N: 10 a. gTsang smyon's intervention in the conflict between Bya and gNyal is rendered also in L: 33 and in G: 38–39. As usual it is rGod tshang ras pa who gives the most detailed description. Cyrus Stearns has summarized a small section of rGod tshang ras pa's account of this episode (Stearns 2007: 73).

[621] It is difficult to determine when gTsang smyon traveled alone and when he had companions. In the latter case it is often unclear how many companions he had and who they were. It is often stated that his brother accompanied him and as we have already seen, gTsang smyon left mKhar kha together with him after having started his itinerant lifestyle. The two brothers probably kept company for many years afterwards, and gTsang smyon's brother is mentioned from time to time in all three *rnam thars*.

[622] G: 41–42. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

To you, who left a foot-imprint in a rock at the holy place of Te se (Kailāsa) and used a human corpse as a seat in the midst of flames.[623]

During his travels gTsang smyon encountered many different situations and his unusual and provocative way of appearing and acting sometimes led him into trouble. Without his miraculous powers he would not have lived long. gTsang smyon often deliberately sought out difficult and dangerous situations, and we find many examples of how he displayed his miraculous powers in the three *rnam thars*.

gTsang smyon encountered one such situation not long after he had left Tsāri and Bya. According to Lha btsun he was twenty-four (1475) when he walked along a small path inside a dense forest and was assaulted by the tribal people inhabiting the area.[624] These "barbarians" (*kla klo*), as the Tibetans generally call them, have no faith in Buddhism and its basic principles, and they sometimes attacked Buddhist pilgrims who entered their territories.[625] Patrul Rinpoche (dPal sprul Rin po che, 1808–1887) gives the following explanation in *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* (*Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung*):

"Barbarians" [*kla klo*] means those who live in the thirty-two border countries, such as the Lokatra [*klo kha khra*], and all those who consider harming others an act of faith or whose savage beliefs see taking life as good. These people inhabiting the outlying territories have human form, but their minds lack the right orientation and they cannot attune themselves to the Dharma.[626]

As usual, it is rGod tshang ras pa who gives the most detailed account of what happened when gTsang smyon encountered the tribal people. It is therefore to the *Heart of the Sun* that we now will turn our attention.[627]

When gTsang smyon traveled together with his brother and two other companions, he suddenly said the following words to his fellow travelers:

"All of you should go up to that deep forest, stay there and take notice! Regardless of what I might do, there will be no need to be afraid, just keep your mouths shut and be completely aware!"

[gTsang smyon] went in advance and met some tribal people (*rngo kha khra*)[628] who forcefully attacked him for about half a day with weapons such

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[623] N: 1b. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 2.

[624] L: 32.

[625] The surroundings of Tsāri were inhabited by tribal people who sometimes killed pilgrims. In order to make a circumambulation around the holy mountain possible, tribute had to be paid to these people. See, for example, Huber 1999: 133–139.

[626] Patrul Rinpoche 1994: 20. dPal sprul rin po che 2004: 25: *kla klo zhes pa ni klo kha khra zhes pa la sogs mtha' 'khob sum cu rtsa gnyis yod par bshad pa rnams dang / 'tshe ba chos su smra ba kla klo'i chos lugs zhes srog bcad pa dge bar rtsi ba rnams te / mtha' 'khob kyi kla klo rnams kyang rang bzhin mi gzugs lta bur yod kyang blo las su ma rungs pas dam pa'i chos kyi phyogs su bsgyur mi btub /.*

[627] The incident is depicted briefly also in L: 33 and N: 10a.

as poisoned arrows, stones, pikes, sickles, swords and so forth. When [attacked] the mighty yogin [gTsang smyon] remained in the meditative concentration called "the unobstructed sky." The weapons could not hit his body but passed by him to the ground. No imprints whatsoever were shown and he did not even respond to their strokes. It was like hitting the sky and apart from wearing out their bodies nothing whatsoever happened. Then again, they separated [gTsang smyon's] head, arms and feet from each other and attached big stones to them. [Then they] throw each part in a big and deep river. The body itself and also the intestines were all separately thrown into the water. Then they took their loads on their backs and when they were preparing to leave [gTsang smyon] appeared in the middle of the deep river, without any damage on his body, just like before. After flying upwards, he snatched their weapons and loads, and threw them into the river. Some he caused great pain by slapping them on their faces, and for a while they all dispersed. Then they gathered again and after tying gTsang smyon's hands and feet with bamboo ropes, they placed him in the middle of a burning fire made of a heap of firewood; it resembled a small mountain. When the fire burned in the four directions the great father siddha dwelled in "the sāmadhi which is cooling and exhausts cold". [The tribal people] fanned with clothes from every direction while screaming war cries that filled the area and [they] remained until the pieces of wood were consumed.

Then the mighty yogin laughed, sang and danced, but apart from some phrases of the spiritual songs that he sang on that occasion, nothing was collected. Then the tribal people [found that the] body of the Lord was completely without injuries or afflictions. They became scared and said, "He must be mGon po Rog pa"[629] and all of them ran away.[630]

It should be noted that this is the first time it is mentioned that gTsang smyon sang spiritual songs (*mgur*). The songs were not recorded, but some phrases of them were remembered according to rGod tshang ras pa.

Having displayed his miraculous powers, gTsang smyon continued to travel. rGod tshang ras pa describes how he

roved about by means of disciplined conduct in absolutely terrifying places of evil spirits, such as charnel grounds, solitary trees, riverbanks, great steppes, empty houses, temples, narrow paths and market gatherings. In all the charnel grounds, provinces and valleys, such as Kong po and sNya, he acted for the sake of many non-humans.[631]

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[628] One of the Tibetans that I read the text with understood this as *rDo kha khra* and saw it as a variant spelling of *klo kha khra*. *kLo kha khra* is the name used for a kind of tribal people who inhabit the borderlands between Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh. This is confirmed by Toni Huber who uses the term *klo pa kha khra* as a nineteenth-century term which possibly refers to a certain tribe of *klo pa* people west of Subansri in the Kameng district (Huber 1999: 254, n. 9). The fact that the tribal people used bamboo ropes supports this since the tribal people called *klo pa* use bamboo; they also are known for using poisoned arrows (see Huber 1999). Lha btsun terms the people *blo kha khra* (L: 33).

[629] This is probably the name of some divinity that they believed in.

[630] G: 39–40. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

[631] G: 40. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

The theme of exorcism is also common in Tibetan hagiographies. The master of the story tames evil spirits and demons of various kinds and thereby improves the surroundings for the inhabitants of the area where the harmful non-human beings reside. The Tibetans of the 15^{th} century, just like other people living in pre-modern societies, depended directly upon natural resources for their livelihoods which consisted of such activities as farming and herding. Like other people in their situation, they believed that various kinds of spirits, gods and demons could influence climate and harvests, and cause epidemics and diseases. A great master, such as Guru Rinpoche or Milarepa, could thus directly affect their circumstances and benefit people and animals by taming the harmful spirits and binding them under oath. By binding these local gods and demons under oath and making them promise not to cause harm, but to act in accordance with Buddhist principles, a Buddhist master could provide effective help in a direct and concrete way. gTsang smyon was no exception, and he often sought out harmful spirits, gods and demons and forced them to become benevolent. We find several such examples in the *rnam thars*.

One such account is depicted in the *Heart of the Sun*. On one occasion, gTsang smyon stayed in a cave that was connected with the eightfold group of spirits (*sde brgyad*)[632] for a couple of days. That night many spirits gathered and attacked him with magical tricks. gTsang smyon subdued them, bound them under oath, and made them promise to carry out beneficial activity in the future.[633]

The Meeting with rGyal dbang chos rje

gTsang smyon continued to display his miraculous powers and tame harmful beings of all kinds while he traveled around. Besides gods and demons, he also encountered many persons during his constant travels. Although he seemed to prefer to establish connections with kings and leaders, he occasionally met some contemporary famous Buddhist masters too.

In the *Heart of the Sun* it is stated that he met the second Bar 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud hierarch, rGyal dbang chos rje ('Brug chen rGyal dbang kun dga' dpal 'byor, 1428–1476), in mKhar chu in Lho brag.[634] Lho brag is famous as the home district of Milarepa's teacher, Marpa, and it is situated in Southern Tibet close to the Bhutanese border. According to the hagiography of Milarepa, it was here that Milarepa met Marpa for the first time in the 11^{th} century. Marpa ordered him to perform ascetic penance, and one of his or-

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[632] There are various ways of making classifications of spirits. Regarding the eightfold groups of spirits, see, for example, Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein (1991: 158–159).
[633] G: 40.
[634] G: 40–41. The meeting occurred not long after he had displayed his miraculous powers and subdued the spirits in the cave of the eightfold group of spirits described above.

deals was to build a nine-storeyed tower that became known as Sred mkar dgu thog.[635] mKhar chu, the place where the meeting occurred, is situated south-east of Milarepa's tower. rGod tshang ras pa mentions that gTsang smyon and rGyal dbang chos rje discussed *Hevajra Tantra* and compared their understanding of meditation when they met. He also informs us that 'Brug chen was very pleased and gTsang smyon very satisfied with their discussions. Then gTsang smyon received teachings and empowerments from rGyal dbang chos rje. He received permission empowerment (*rjes gnang*) of the Four Armed Wisdom Protector, and teachings of the ritual practices (*sgrub thab*) of the lineage that had been transmitted from Zhang 'gro ba'i mgon po (1123–1193)[636] to gTsang pa rgya ras (1161–1211),[637] and also of the lineage that had been transmitted from Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po (1110–1170) to gLing ras pa Pad ma rdo rje (1128–1188). gTsang smyon also received the Long-life Empowerment of Amitayus of Ras chung's transmission. It is finally mentioned that gTsang smyon was appointed Lord of Dharma (*chos kyi bdag po*) by the head of the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud tradition.[638]

Establishing Connections with Powerful Leaders

We have already seen examples of how gTsang smyon seemed to single out kings and leaders whom he provoked and eventually impressed with his miraculous powers and learning. This was a very important enterprise that seemed to contribute a great deal to the influence and success he finally obtained. With powerful supporters he acquired funding and support, which enabled him to act effectively "for the sake of the beings and the Buddhist doctrine."

rGod tshang ras pa describes how gTsang smyon assaulted a king and queen who came riding on their horses together with many followers in sNa dkar rtse.[639] gTsang smyon grabbed the queen's horse by its mouth and pulled. Despite gTsang smyon's provocative and weird way of behaving, the queen showed no anger. Instead, she felt devotion and offered him two piec-

635 The tower is still extant and Tibetan pilgrims have continued to go there, see Gyurme Dorje 2004: 220–221.

636 brTson 'grus grags pa alias Zhang 'gro ba'i mgon po (1123–1193) was the first lineage holder of the Tshal pa transmissions.

637 gTsang pa rgya ras ye shes rdo rje (1161–1211) was the first 'Brug chen.

638 G: 41. It should be kept in mind that the meeting between gTsang smyon and rGyal dbang chos rje is not mentioned in the *rnam thar* by dNgos grub dpal 'bar. Lha btsun, on the other hand, mentions that a meeting between the two masters occurred, not in mKhar chu but in Ra lung, the main seat of the Bar 'Brug tradition (L: 40).

639 The meeting occured shortly after the above-mentioned meeting with the rGyal dbang chos rje.

es of coral and three other precious stones for his *khaṭvāṅga*.[640] gTsang smyon predicted that the queen would give birth to three sons and two daughters as a result of her offering, and since things turned out just as he predicted everyone became very devoted.[641]

Continuing in the same spirit, gTsang smyon went by way of lCags rtse gri gu[642] to bSam de at the eastern side of the upper end of the Yar lung valley.

> There he met the king Grags pa mtha' yas[643] with his retinue gathered for a party in the singing house (*glu khang*). The guardians of the gate and the watchdogs were subdued by [gTsang smyon's] splendor. He went to the head of the rows and sat down in front of the king and queen. Snatching the remaining beer from the hands of the king, the Lord poured from a silver vessel and drank. At that time, they had a nice *gaṇacakra* and [gTsang smyon] took the meat [of the *gaṇacakra*] with his teeth and consumed it.[644] Then, in the manner of a dirty dogbone, he threw them [the bones] on the lap of the queen and said, "Hey woman (*mo*)![645] You need this, and I am giving it to you!" Because of this auspicious connection a son later was born which caused [everyone present] to become very devoted.[646]

Once again, gTsang smyon's provocations were thus met with devotion. This was not always the case, however. rGod tshang ras pa gives a couple of examples of occasions when gTsang smyon's strangeness did not give rise to such exalted feelings. When gTsang smyon arrived in Yar lungs tsha ba gru, for example, he went directly to the local leader in his usual manner, but this time he received neither respect nor devotion. The leader and his followers remained indifferent to the mad yogin and this had a devastating result according to the *Heart of the Sun*. Only seven days after gTsang smyon's visit, the son of the leader drowned while playing in the water.[647]

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640 There are different ways of transcribing this Sanskrit word with Tibetan letters, and I will stick to the standard Sanskrit transliteration regardless of how the Tibetans have transcribed it in the sources that I use. For a description of the *khaṭvāṅga* or "tantric staff", see, for example, Beer 2003: 102–107. See also gTsang smyon's own detailed description of the *khaṭvāṅga* in the *Heart of the Sun* (G: 231 ff.).

641 G: 41.

642 lCags rtse gri gu is a township situated in mTsho smad County on the north-west shore of the Gri gu lake. The township is an important intersection (Gyurme Dorje 2004: 215).

643 The king of bSam sde, Grags pa mtha' yas, was one of the important figures during the troubled administration of Kun dga' legs pa (reigned 1448–81). The administrative center of bSam sde ba was Yar klungs Phu shar (Smith 2001: 286, n. 157). The bSam sde king is mentioned in the *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* (Tucci 1971: 224) and according to this text he broke his connections with the dGe ldan pas (i.e. dGe lugs pa) (Tucci 1971: 237).

644 This means that he ate with very bad manners.

645 To call a woman *mo* is considered impolite in Tibetan, and to call a queen *mo* is thus particularly improper.

646 G: 41. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

647 G: 42.

A Mad Yogin under Attack

gTsang smyon continued to travel around, and at one point he went to an important monastic department in rTse thang. Arriving in rTse thang, he sat on a large stūpa. While sitting there he was attacked by a group of very intoxicated persons who felt provoked when seeing him. With a strong determination to end the life of the mad yogin, the drunks threw stones at him and stabbed him with different weapons.

> Despite this, by remaining evenly in the hard and solid vajra-like meditative concentration, knives were not able to cut through, and knives and lances used for harming him became bent.
>
> "This person must have a 'weapon-protection'," they said.[648] Then, drawing their knives across their behinds and feet, they attacked him repeatedly.[649]
>
> The Lord thought to himself, "In general, [one needs to] obtain a human body with freedoms and endowments.[650] So, in particular, what need is there to even mention [the need to] enter into the teachings of the Buddha, becoming ordained and accomplish liberation. [These people] do not accomplish the happiness of the higher realms, but accumulate only actions of the lower realms. I feel sorry for beings [who are] more blind than lay people,[651] but what can be done?" Moved by unbearable compassion tears came to his eyes.
>
> One of the persons [who attacked gTsang smyon] said, "He has a powerful weapon-protection indeed. Knives do not hurt him but still stones might be of use." Another one said, "Even if wounds do not arise maybe there is pain?" Then one of them said, "Do not attack him now, he is not our enemy." After having said this, they all left.
>
> The body of the Lord was not harmed and he felt no anger, instead it was as if a rain of flowers had fallen upon him.[652]

The account presents gTsang smyon as a true bodhisattva who felt love and compassion even towards the most evil-minded persons. His way of acting corresponds to the way in which a bodhisattva should act. rGyal sras thog med (1295–1369) expresses one of the main practices of a bodhisattva as follows in *Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*:

> For a bodhisattva who desires the joys of virtue,
> All who harm him are like a precious treasure.

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[648] "Weapon protection" (*mtshon srung*) is a kind of blessed object worn on the body to protect the wearer from harm caused by weapons.

[649] To defile a weapon in this way is believed to make a weapon-protection amulet ineffective.

[650] According to Buddhist doctrine, a human being must possess eigth freedoms (*dal*) and ten endowments (*'byor*) to be able to take full advangage of his or her human birth. For an enumeration and explanation of them, see, for example, Kongtrul 1986: 31–33; Patrul Rinpoche 1994: 19–29.

[651] This expression gives the impression that the drunken people who attacked gTsang smyon were monks, and although this is one possibility it is hard to determine the identity of the drunks.

[652] G: 42–43. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1. The same story is rendered briefly in N: 10a.

Therefore, to cultivate patience toward all,
Without resentment, is the practice of a bodhisattva.[653]

gTsang smyon continued to display his miraculous powers to the amazement of those who witnessed him. When he came to Ba do, he wanted to cross the river but there were no ferries around. gTsang smyon held his breath and sat down on the surface of the water. Then, sitting in vajra-position and using his *khaṭvāṅga* as an oar, he paddled across the river. Some monks and women of bSam yas saw him while he crossed the river. Full of devotion, they offered him prostrations.[654]

On another occasion, gTsang smyon's provocations were met with anger. When passing through Shel grong north of the gTsang po river, gTsang smyon encountered a leader (*dpon po*) and his followers who amused themselves with food and drink inside a house.

> He went in the middle of the rows [of assembled people] and took the drinking bowl that was made of silver and full of beer from the hands of the leader and drank it. The attendant of the king became very angry. His face changed, and he pulled out a merchant's knife with a short handle from its sheath and began to attack [gTsang smyon]. [gTsang smyon] subdued him by means of a meditative concentration that is like an illusion within the nature of the glorious Hevajra; lifted the *khaṭvāṅga* in his hand and said:
>
> The *khaṭvāṅga* is the king of weapons.
> It is the hand weapon of the ḍākinīs and *ma mos*.[655]
> If you thrust it three times nine wounds will arise.
>
> He showed his teeth and stared with his eyes. Everyone was stunned and the knife in the attendant's hand fell to the ground. The king said [to his attendant], "You must ask for forgiveness. This is one who has entered into the conduct of a yogin." Once again, [everyone] felt devotion and faith and then offered [gTsang smyon] great respect.[656]

[653] Gyalse Thogme 2007: 34; rGyal sras thog med 1982: 143: *dge ba'i longs spyod 'dod pa'i rgyal sras la / / gnod byed thams cad rin chen gter dang mtshungs / / de phyir kun la zhe 'gras med pa yi / / bzod pa sgom pa rgyal sras lag len yin /.*
[654] G: 43. An almost identical passage is found in L: 37.
[655] *Ma mo* is the name of a class of a female spirits. It could also be name of a divine woman or of a kind of ḍākinī.
[656] G: 43. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

Traveling on

gTsang smyon continued his constant travels. After having visited Rwa sgreng,[657] Yer pa[658] and some other places, he decided to go to Lhasa.[659] While traveling towards the holy city, gTsang smyon heard that the district officer (*sde pa*)[660] of sNe'u rdzong, dPal 'byor rgyal po, was approaching. dPal 'byor rgyal po (d. 1490) was an important leader who is mentioned in several Tibetan historical records. Both the Fifth Dalai Lama's history of Tibet and the *New Red Annals* refer to him.[661] He was the son of the Drung chen Grags pa dpal bzang and his wife, sKal ldan rin chen bzang mo, and was sometimes called Drung chen dPal 'byor rgyal po.[662] From his father he had inherited the right to rule the region around Lhasa and beyond.[663] dPal 'byor rgyal po's mother was one of Thang stong rgyal po's main patrons in Central Tibet, and he thus knew that some great masters behaved in seemingly mad ways.[664]

gTsang smyon could not resist the opportunity to establish a connection with such an important leader. As soon as dPal 'byor rgyal po and his many followers drew closer he sat down in the middle of the road.

> While he sat [there] he urinated in his skull-cup, made a dough of [urine and] *tsam pa* and ate. Many mules loaded with burdens and dogs passed by at the edge of the road. The people said, "Oh! This could be Thang stong rgyal po."
>
> Then the horsemen of the leader arrived. A person rode a dark-yellow horse towards the Lord who stared [at him] and when the horse was about one fathom from [gTsang smyon the horse] reared up and then turned off the road. After this, the other horses turned as well. Then a rider returned and asked, "Yogin! Where do you come from? What are you doing here? And where are you going now?"
>
> "Why should I say where I came from?" [gTsang smyon] replied. "The district governor has sent me to ask, please tell me," [the man] replied. "I do not have any district governor," [gTsang smyon] said. "I will be scolded, you know it, so please tell me," the other pleaded.
>
> "Well then, I am coming from 'the origination' (*kun 'byung*). Now, while being on 'the path' (*lam*), I am eating the dough of 'suffering' (*sdug bsngal*).

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[657] A famous monastery that was founded by Atiśa's chief disciple 'Brom ston rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas (1005–1064). Rwa sgreng became the main seat of the bKa' gdams tradition, and it is situated about 100 km north of Lhasa.

[658] Yer pa or Brag yer pa is an important early site of hermitages and meditation caves situated about 30 km north-east of Lhasa.

[659] G: 43.

[660] Other titles used for this leader are governor (*rdzong dpon*), chief (*nang so*) and high official (*drung chen*).

[661] Dalai Lama, Fifth 1995: 153. *Deb gter dmar po gsar ma*, Tucci (trans.) 1971: 223.

[662] Stearns 2007: 488, n. 260; 535, n. 658.

[663] Stearns 2007: 534, n. 658.

[664] Stearns 2007: 534, n. 658.

[And] I am now heading towards 'cessation' (*'gog pa*),"[665] [gTsang smyon] said.

[The horseman] did not understand so [gTsang smyon] repeated it at least three times. Then [the horseman] reported to the chief (*nang so*) [dPal 'byor rgyal po] who said, "These are the activities, meaningful thoughts and expressions of the most excellent speech of a yogin. They must be investigated."[666]

Lhasa

After having made his existence known to the leader, gTsang smyon continued to Lhasa.[667] When he arrived there, the people who saw him became afraid. Convinced he was a *rākṣasa* demon (*srin po*), the assembled people ran away. The crowded market was emptied, and people went into hiding in their houses. gTsang smyon spent the night under a single willow tree. As soon as he woke up the following morning, he started playing his drum and blowing his thighbone trumpet. When the people realized that the bizarre figure was still present, they were frightened and ran away once more.[668]

gTsang smyon then went to the Kaṃ ṇi sgo bzhi stūpa in Lhasa where he resided for a while.[669] The large stūpa had four gateways (*sgo bzhi*) through each of its four sides below the terraced steps.[670] Almost a century earlier, the siddha Thang stong rgyal po had spent a year in this stūpa without moving his body. This had a profound impact on the people of Lhasa. However, Thang stong rgyal po's eccentric ways had made the people suspicious. It is said that some accused him of being a demon (*'dre*) while others held him to be a non-Buddhist.[671] Nevertheless, the siddha's stay in Lhasa seems to have paved the way for gTsang smyon. We have already seen that when people saw how gTsang smyon urinated in his *tsam pa* and ate it, they speculated whether gTsang smyon could be Thang stong rgyal po. Had it not been for Thang stong rgyal po's previous visit it would perhaps have been more likely that everyone would have held gTsang smyon to be a demon without even considering the other possibilities. Now at least some people thought that he might be a siddha, perhaps Thang stong rgyal po.[672] Finally some monks

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[665] This is a pun on the Four Noble Truths: 1) *sdug bsngal gyi bden pa* "the truth of suffering"; 2) *kun 'byung gi bden pa* "the truth of the source"; 3) *'gog pa'i bden pa* "the truth of cessation"; 4) *lam gyi bden pa* "the truth of the path".

[666] G: 44. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

[667] Lha btsun provides some accounts of gTsang smyon's visit in Lhasa that are missing in the other texts, see L: 38–40.

[668] G: 44.

[669] G: 44; L: 40; N: 10a. The *rnam thar*s uses the variant spellings: Ka ka ni sgo bzhi ma (G), Kag ṇi sgo bzhi ma (L) and Ka ka ṇi sgo bzhi ma (N) when referring to the stūpa.

[670] Stearns 2007: 521, n. 539.

[671] Stearns 2007: 70.

[672] G: 44; L: 40; N: 10a.

from dPal 'khor chos sde, who were visiting Lhasa, came by and recognized their former monk colleague. So did a lay practitioner who was responsible for tending the stūpa. Despite his frightful appearance, they all offered gTsang smyon veneration and asked him for teaching.[673]

The district officer, dPal 'byor rgyal po, who had been impressed and puzzled by gTsang smyon's enigmatic behavior earlier, heard that the mad yogin was giving teachings in Lhasa. He decided that he wanted to find out if gTsang smyon really was a *rākṣasa* demon, so he invited him to his palace—dPal 'byor lhun po.[674]

> When [gTsang smyon] arrived at the gate the gatekeeper asked him where he came from.
>
> "I come from ignorance," [gTsang smyon] replied. Then as he entered into the main rows inside, a learned monk (*rab 'byams pa*)[675] asked him [once more],
>
> "Yogin where do you come from?"
>
> "It is uncertain where I come from," [gTsang smyon] answered.
>
> "Well then, didn't you just say that you came from ignorance?"
>
> "Being from ignorance entails the absence of habitation (*ka cha med*)."
>
> When gTsang smyon said [that, the *rab 'byams pa*] had no courage to say anything at all.
>
> Then after a magnificent show of hospitality and veneration had been displayed, some *dge bshes* from Se ra and 'Bras spungs wanted to enter into a debate [with gTsang smyon]. The *dge bshes* said, "We have never heard of this kind of clothing and conduct among the words of the Buddha. It is not a custom that has existed before. Whose tradition is this way of dress and conduct of yours?" The mighty yogin replied:
>
> The ant cannot see the mountain.
> The frog in the well cannot find the end of the sea.
> The hand of a child cannot cover the sky.
>
> "There are many dharmas and much knowledge of which you have not heard. If this way of dress is a custom that has not arisen previously, in that case have the deities of the Secret Mantra and the eighty *mahāsiddha*s of India also never existed before? Have you not even seen the paintings? These clothes and conduct of mine are explained in general in the Secret Mantra [tradition] of Vajradhara—the highest tantras and in particular in the concise root-tantra of Hevajra, the glorious *brTag pa gnyis pa*.[676]

[673] G: 44.

[674] This incident is mentioned briefly in the *Lion of Faith* (N: 10b).

[675] This is a very high degree of learning among monks and the highest *dge bshes* degree. It is a kind of diploma resembling in a fashion the degree of Doctor of Divinity, which the Buddhist priesthood confers on monastic students of sacred literature.

[676] G: 45. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1. The last part of this section of the *rnam thar* has been translated in Smith 2001: 69. I have used Smith's excellent translation as a basis for translating this section.

gTsang smyon then explained under which conditions it is allowed, or appropriate, to engage in the conduct (*spyod pa*). He specifically mentioned that only certain persons are qualified to engage in the conduct. Moreover, the conduct should only be carried out at the proper time and in the right place. The conduct must also be done among the right associates, and finally it is important to have correct reasons for doing it and the way in which the conduct is acted out must also be right. gTsang smyon said that his way of acting and appearing had been explained in many Buddhist scriptures and it could also be understood if one used logical reasoning. Countless tantras supported it, and if some dialecticians did not know this, there was nothing he could do about it.[677] All the *dge bshes* could say in reply was:

> "Now is not the time for such a conduct of the Secret Mantra."
>
> [To this gTsang smyon said:] "Well then, is it time for the conduct of the Secret Mantra when one is born in the eight unfavourable states?[678] Where is it explained that now is not the time for the practice of Secret Mantra?"
>
> Not daring to say anything whatsoever from scriptures or established reasoning [the *dge bshes*] rose from the rows and left. The ruler (*sde pa*) offered [gTsang smyon] respect and service with supreme devotion.[679]

gTsang smyon then left dPal 'byor lhun po and went to Chu shul, a small township about 35 km south of Lhasa. There he encountered three leaders accompanied by thirty soldiers who were preparing for war. Predictably enough, gTsang smyon stepped up in front of one of the leaders, grabbed his beer and drank it. His provocative behavior did not go unnoticed. The soldiers became upset and threatened gTsang smyon with their weapons. gTsang smyon defended himself with his tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) and they became afraid. One of their leaders then said that he had had a dream about Saraha the previous night, and this dream was probably a premonition of gTsang smyon's arrival. "He is an extraordinary yogin, offer him prostrations," said the leader, and then he requested blessings from gTsang smyon himself.[680]

gTsang smyon then decided that he should return to mKhar kha and visit his mother.[681] He had not seen her for some four years, and as we have already seen, he had a strong bond with her. Her dreams and visions often guided him while he was growing up in mKhar kha, and she seems to have

[677] G: 45.

[678] The eight unfavourable states of existence in which individuals are disadvantaged are: *dmyal ba* (hell), *yi dwags* (hungry ghost), *dud 'grod* (animal), *kla klo* (barbarians), *lha tshe ring po* (long lived gods), *mu stegs pa* (heretics), *sangs rgyas ma byon pa'i mun skal* (a dark age where no Buddha has appeared), and finally *lkugs pa* (imbecile). See for instance Kongtrul 1986: 31.

[679] G: 46. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

[680] G: 46. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

[681] The meeting with his mother is described in a similar way in all three *rnam thars* (G: 46; L: 41; N: 10b).

been one of the few people to whom he listened after becoming a wandering yogin.[682] The homeless vagabond that her son had become did not want to stay long in mKhar kha, but soon prepared to leave again. This time he wanted to go to Chu bar, a holy mountain area where Milarepa had spent long periods of meditation and eventually passed away. Chu bar is situated close to another of Milarepa's favorite places of meditation—La phyi—and numerous caves where Milarepa and his close disciples used to meditate are found in the area. As mentioned above, gTsang smyon had always felt a particularly strong faith towards Milarepa, and he now wanted to literally follow in his foot-steps, and also fulfill the final instructions of his guru, Sha ra ba, namely: "Give up the eight worldly concerns and set the victory banner of practice in the bKa' brgyud great holy sites such as Tsāri rtsa gong, La phyi, Chu bar, Gangs Ti se, and the Six Forts."[683] His mother did not like the idea of her beloved son roaming around as a mad vagabond with no fixed abode, and she told him that he should return to dPal 'khor chos sde, the monastery where he had studied previously.

"Please stay once again in dPal 'khor sde chen and practise in that lovely place where you first [studied] dharma," his mother told him.[684] She did not give gTsang smyon permission to leave and her son had to ask her repeatedly. Eventually she agreed to let him go on the condition that he did not take the human skin (*g.yang bzhi*)[685] that he used as a cloak and his skull-cup with hair attached to it (*thod pa lcang lo can*).

"Otherwise [people] will say that you are a rākṣasa demon (*srin po*) and kill you" his mother told him.[686] gTsang smyon obeyed to his mother and gave his bizarre paraphernalia to her. The objects gTsang smyon left behind later became known for their ability to protect from harm caused by malevolent demons and devils; they could also be used to harm enemies if they were clashed together.[687]

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[682] G: 46. As mentioned in a previous footnote, Lha btsun states that gTsang smyon visited the famous Bar 'brug monastery in Ra lung. This meeting took place while he was residing in mKhar kha, and in Ra lung he received teachings from the head of the Bar 'brug tradition, rGyal dbang chos rje (L: 40–41).

[683] See above p. 90.

[684] G: 46. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

[685] *g.Yang bzhi* literally mean a whole skin (often antelope) but here it refers to a whole human skin. The reason for translating it as human skin is that gTsang smyon is known for having a human skin, and if this was not the case I find no reason for his mother objecting him having it.

[686] G: 46. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

[687] N: 10b.

The Meeting with Thang stong rgyal po

gTsang smyon left mKhar kha, and once again his younger brother, dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, accompanied him as his attendant. The two brothers did not go to Chu bar directly but took a roundabout way. Instead of going south-west, they traveled north-west through the southern parts of Northern La stod. According to Lha btsun, gTsang smyon was twenty-five years old when he left mKhar kha, and after having traveled for a while he arrived at the foot of dPal chen ri bo che.[688] This monastic complex was built by Thang stong rgyal po in Western La stod byang on a scorpion-shaped mountain, on the northern shore of the gTsang po river in the valley of gCung. The complex consisted of two monasteries, one at the foot of the mountain and one on its peak. In addition, there was a stūpa and an iron bridge.[689] We have already seen that gTsang smyon was sometimes mistaken for Thang stong rgyal po, and according to the life stories he wanted to meet the great siddha who was probably 115 years old at the time (1476).[690] It is noteworthy that gTsang smyon very seldom visited other Buddhist masters after having obtained enlightenment. That he wished to see the bridge-building siddha shows that he—or if the story is invented, his disciples—held Thang stong rgyal po to be of particular importance. Like gTsang smyon, Thang stong rgyal po was known for practising disciplined conduct, and it is thus possible that the siddha was a source of inspiration for him. Cyrus Stearns mentions that Thang stong rgyal po and gTsang smyon were the most important mad yogins in terms of their lasting influence on Tibetan culture and religion. He also suggests that "the account of their meeting portrays the continuity of the tradition of religious madness in Tibet and heralds the appearance of Tsang Nyön [gTsang smyon] as the next great mad yogin."[691]

dNgos grub dpal 'bar depicts their meeting as follows in the *Lion of Faith*:

> Then, with his brother (*dbon po*) as his attendant, he traveled through La stod byang and arrived at the foot of dPal chen ri bo che. Having sent his brother on ahead, the precious Lord continued behind. On the peak of the Ri bo che he met the mahāsiddha Thang stong rgyal po who was performing the 10th-day *gaṇacakra*. [gTsang smyon] went directly to him. In front of the mahāsiddha there was a very large wooden bowl, covered with paste on both the inside and the outside and filled with beer. The Lord (gTsang smyon) took it in his hands and drank. All the people were stunned, and even the mahāsiddha stared [at gTsang smyon] for a while.

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688 L: 41.

689 Stearns 1980: 125.

690 The dates for Thang stong rgyal po's birth and death (1361–1485) and the tradition of his long life span have long been controversial. Stearns suggests that we should accept that he lived for 125 years unless further evidence concerning when the siddha was born comes to light (Stearns 2007: 14).

691 Stearns 2007: 79.

Then, the mahāsiddha said, "This is an excellent auspicious circumstance! [Now] give me your garment!"

The Lord answered, "An excellent auspicious circumstance is [always] excellent. Since you have so many, give this to me!" After saying this, he seized the mahāsiddha's cloak.

The mahāsiddha said, "[You] have very good disciplined conduct. Go now! I will see that you have no obstacles."[692]

rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun describe the meeting in almost exactly the same way as dNgos grub dpal 'bar, but Lha btsun adds a peculiar detail.[693] Up to the point where gTsang smyon took Thang stong rgyal po's beer and drank it the story is the same, but after having done that gTsang smyon

grabbed and bit the great adepts's beard.

The great adept jerked his head back and cried, "Ow! Ow!"

The lord remarked, "What kind of great adept is this? He cries out in pain, unable to bear even the sting of his beard."

The great adept laughed, and said with embarrassment, "A fine auspicious connection. Offer me that garment of yours."[694]

It is hard to know if meetings such as this actually occurred. It is possible that the hagiographers inserted such accounts just to retrospectively create lineage affiliations that did not exist in the first place. Other possible reasons could be to show the importance of the master, or perhaps, to make the life story more interesting. Given the fact that dNgos grub dpal 'bar does not mention the meeting between rGyal dbang chos rje and gTsang smyon that was related above, for example, one might suspect that the meeting could be fabricated. On the other hand, it is also possible that dNgos grub dpal 'bar, either did not know about such a meeting, or if he knew about it did not regard it as important enough to be included into his rather short *rnam thar*. That all three authors describe the meeting with Thang stong rgyal po at some length shows that they all regarded the possible meeting to be of par-

692 N: 10b–11a: *de nas dbon po pas phyags phyi ba gyis te / la stod byang rgyud nas phebs pa las / dpal chen ri bo che'i rtsa ru phebs pa dang / dpon po pa sngon la btang / rje rin po ches rjes nas phebs tshe / grub chen thang stong rgyal po ri bo'i che rtse na tshes bcus'i tshogs 'khor mdzad pa dang thug pas der zang thal du phebs te / grub chen gyi sku 'khris na / shing phor shin tu che ba phyi nang gnyis ka / skyo mas gos pa gcig chang gis bkang 'dug pa / rjes phyag tu bzhes nas gsol bas / mi kun had de las shing / grub chen kyang res shig spyan gcer re 'dug cing / de nas grub chen gyi gsung gis / rten 'brel legs nga la khyod kyi gos de phul gsung ba la / rje'i zhal nas / rten 'brel legs legs pa yin / khyod mod pa 'dug pas / nga la 'di slang gsung nas / grub chen gyi sle bem la phyag 'jus pas / grub chen gyi gsung nas / rtul zhugs (brtul zhugs) dga' rab 'dug / da rgyug nga yis bar chad med pa bya yis gsung ngo /.*

693 The meeting with Thang stong rgyal po is depicted in G: 46–47; L: 41–42. Lha btsun's account is translated in Stearns 1980: 171–172; Stearns 2007: 79.

694 Stearns 2007: 79; L: 41: *yang rje nyid kyis grub chen gyi ag tshom togs te zhal du bcug pas / a tsa tsha gsung zhing dbu khrug khrug mdzad cing 'dug pas / rjes ji 'dra'i grub thob yang yong ba 'dug sma ra tsha ba yang mi bzod pa'i sdug skad 'don pa gsung pas / grub thob bzhad cing skyengs pa'i gsung gis rten 'brel legs nga la khyod kyi gos de phul gsung ba la /.*

ticular importance. However, as we have observed, it is hard to know whether such a meeting actually occurred or not.[695]

Encountering the Dead

After gTsang smyon had met the great siddha, he and his brother headed south. They traversed sMon and came to Tsha mda', a few kilometers west of Ding ri blang 'khor, only some days walk from Chu bar. There he met the leader of the area, Nam mkha' stob rgyal and his retinue. At this point gTsang smyon had once again managed to obtain the strange paraphernalia that his mother did not want him to carry around. As so often before when meeting kings and leaders, gTsang smyon went up to the king, who was eating, without observing any respectful behavior. "Holding a skull-cup with some strands of hair attached (*bhan ḍha lcang lo can*) in his left hand and a thigh-bone trumpet with a human hand attached to it in his right hand he went inside unhindered, and said: 'Serve me some food'."[696]

Nam mkha' stob rgyal said that gTsang smyon had to prostrate to him if he wanted food. gTsang smyon then prostrated in a very awkward way, turning his back to the king and only using one of his hands. His strange prostration caused everyone present to burst into laughter. They treated gTsang smyon with great respect and served him nice food. The leader of Tsha mda', Nam mkha' stob rgyal, then ordered some learned monk-scholars (*dge bshes*) to check gTsang smyon's knowledge and ask him questions. The leader ascertained that gTsang smyon was a genuine yogin and developed faith in him. Before parting, he said, "Lama, if you stay in La phyi I will offer you practice-provisions (*bsgrub rgyags*)."[697] gTsang smyon promised to visit La phyi and meditate there, but at a later date, since his destination at this time was Chu bar.[698]

Having won over yet another powerful benefactor, gTsang smyon continued towards Chu bar. Before going there, he went to a charnel ground that the Indian master Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas had visited in earlier times. The charnel ground is situated in bLang 'khor, near Ding ri, and it was a very frightening place, according to rGod tshang ras pa.

> It was the abode of the ḍākinī field protectors—the five Kun ḍa li sisters—and a nāga demon with a snake skull. A stone that came from the Cool Grove Charnel Ground,[699] with an indentation in the middle, was laid out as a seat

[695] No meeting between them is mentioned in 'Gyur med bde chen's standard Thang stong rGyal po *rnam thar* ('Gyur med bde chen 1976; translated in Stearns 2007).
[696] G: 47. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.
[697] G: 47. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.
[698] G: 47.
[699] Dur khrod bsil ba tshal (Cool Grove Charnel Ground) Sanskrit: Śhītavana is the name of one of the eight charnel grounds (*dur khrod brgyad*). This charnel ground is situated about ten

for the corpses. Meat- and blood-eating birds and predatory beasts walked around. It was the gathering place for inexhaustible demi-gods, ghouls, and the eight kinds of demons. Hosts of fresh as well as old corpses, skeletons, and many walking dead and elemental spirits filled [the place]. [gTsang smyon] went to this absolutely terrifying place.

He stayed there for some days and slept on a carpet [made of a] corpse. One night actual male and female walking-dead (*ro lang*) [appeared]. [Some] had no head and [some] had no legs or arms, [others] had half the body missing and took out their entrails with their own hands. [There was also] skeletons. Some female corpses opened each other's vaginas with their hands and danced around. Because of the noise [gTsang smyon] arose [from] his meditation. He fought with the male walking-dead and enjoyed himself with the females and then all of the magical apparitions disappeared.[700]

Having subdued the many spirits, on the following day gTsang smyon went to a place where one corpse had been cremated and another scattered to birds.

[gTsang smyon] smeared corpse-ashes on his body, and made ornaments for his neck, hands and feet from intestines. Then he went into a crowd of people [consisting] of relatives [that were having] a bazaar [in order to] make offerings (*nye mchod byed pa'i khrom rnams*).[701] He put *gtor ma*s in his mouth and ate them. He jumped around among the people [at the] bazaar, sometimes beating his chest, dancing and singing, and at times crying. He made his vajra fit for action and chased all the women, mounting, kissing and hugging them. Sometimes he withdrew his vajra into the interior of his body (*rdo rje sbub su drangs*), and it became just a hole with fringes of short hairs.[702] Having made it a place of non-activity, he chased all the men shouting: "Fuck me!" grabbed hold [of them] and embraced [them].

[gTsang smyon also] threw feces and urine on people and put it in his mouth. He performed all kinds of disciplined conduct, but due to everyone's fear [they] could not do anything to stand up to him.[703] Not the least bit of devotion arose in the many small-minded persons (*theg dman gyi rigs*).[704]

Although we have seen how gTsang smyon managed to gain disciples and supporters by acting out in very bizarre and provocative ways, it is perhaps

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miles to the north of Bodhgaya and is regarded as the dwelling place of the Dharma Protector Mahākāla.

[700] G: 47–48. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1. dNgos grub dpal 'bar describes another occasion on which gTsang smyon, accompanied by his disciple Kun dga' legs bzang, subdued some walking dead (*ro lang*) that had caused an epidemic (N: 13b–14a).

[701] According to mKhan po Ngag dbang rdo rje, this is a kind of market where relatives of a deceased person sell things in order to generate offerings needed for funeral rites.

[702] This sentence is difficult to translate. The full sentence is: *res rdo rje sbub su drangs nas bug pa hu re ba'i mtha' ma la spu sud tsam las med par mdzad nas*. Roberts understands this sentence as meaning "Sometimes he bound his penis so that only his pubic hair was visible" Roberts 2007: 63.

[703] *brTul zhugs kyi spyod pa ci mdzad kyang kun 'jigs zhing bkrag pa las sgol (rgol) ba yang ma nus*.

[704] G: 48. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 1.

no wonder that actions such as these failed to make people devoted. We must nevertheless assume that he became legendary and famous, or perhaps infamous, because of his unusual ways of appearing and acting.

Chu bar and Nepal

> I bow down to you who were welcomed to Chu bar by the ḍākinī field protectors.
> The protector of the Aural Transmission offered delightful offerings.
> Shan ta spu gri[705] prayed to you and exhorted you, and the benevolent gods carried out your wishes.[706]

The mad yogin, who had now made his presence known to the people in the Ding ri area, continued towards Chu bar. When he came close to the holy place, the main field protectors and ḍākinīs of the area welcomed him.[707] The most prominent among them were the Five Long Life Sisters (*Tshe ring mched lnga*). Several hundred years earlier the Five Long Life Sisters had been "tamed" (*'dul ba*) by Milarepa, and since then they had served as important protectresses of his lineage. At first, they tried to disturb and harm the cotton-clad yogin who meditated in the areas where they lived, but unable to do so, they became his devoted disciples and consorts.[708] The Five Long Life Sisters are connected with the 7 148 m high Gaurishankar Mountain—called Jo bo Tshe ring ma by Tibetans—the westernmost of a group of five holy peaks situated directly south of Chu bar at the border of Tibet and Nepal.[709] The fact that these important local divinities came and welcomed gTsang smyon was yet another sign of his close link to Milarepa and his lineage. Indeed, as has been mentioned earlier, gTsang smyon eventually came to be considered an emanation of Milarepa, and this is further supported by the prominent divinities that welcomed him. Having offered gTsang smyon delightful offerings, the Five Long Life Sisters disappeared, and gTsang smyon continued on his journey. gTsang smyon arrived in Chu bar by the end of the summer. Before settling down, he made one outer cir-

[705] In the account of the renovation (*dkar chag*), Shan ta spu gri and Bi sho kar ma are said to have been protectors of Svayambhū Stūpa (G: 225–226). It should be noted that Shan ta spu gri sounds like the name of the cave associated with the legendary Śāntikaryācārya that is called Śāntipura and is one of the five mansions around the stūpa (Slusser 1982: 300, 355). For Śāntikara and Śāntipura's role in the legendary history of Svayambhū, see Brinkhaus 2001.
[706] N: 2a. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 2.
[707] G: 48; L: 42; N: 11a.
[708] Milarepa's interactions with the Long Life Sisters are narrated in several songs. For English translations of these songs, see Chang (trans.) 1989: 296–361.
[709] For a travel account and guide to the area, see Chan 1994: 248–272.

cumambulation (*phyi skor*) and then stayed in Chu bar for the whole autumn.[710]

It should be noticed that holy places such as Chu bar, La phyi, Tsāri and Ti se were/are seen as earthly manifestations of the maṇḍala of Cakrasaṃvara, who together with Hevajra is one of the central herukas. In going to such places gTsang smyon, as an embodiment of a heruka, the main deity of the maṇḍala, thus returned to the place where he belonged.

When the winter came, gTsang smyon met several traders on a combined trading and pilgrimage trip to the Svayambhū Stūpa in Nepal.[711] He joined company with a group of traders that was led by a certain lama dPon ri ba.[712] gTsang smyon showed no respect towards the lama which made the lama's male and female followers angry. They used poison to try to kill gTsang smyon but he only became slightly ill and then quickly recovered.[713]

In Nepal, gTsang smyon went to a temple on the Tundikhel in Kathmandu, which contains one of the most revered Mahākāla statues in the Valley. The Tibetans call the statue Bod thang mgon po, and it was of great importance for gTsang smyon.[714] All the three *rnam thar*s agree that gTsang smyon's first trip to Nepal occurred after his meeting with Thang stong rgyal po, and since Lha btsun states that gTsang smyon was twenty-five years old when he met the famous siddha, and twenty-six when he returned to Tibet.[715] gTsang smyon probably visited Nepal for the first time around 1477.[716] The *rnam thar*s describe how several miracles occurred when gTsang smyon visited the Mahākāla statue. While gTsang smyon was performing expiatory rituals (*skangs bshags*) and exhortations (*skul*) in front of the protector it started to move. It was as if heaven and earth were about to break into pieces, and the statue became as huge as a mountain and started to dance violently. This did not scare gTsang smyon, who took the protector by the hands and started to dance with him.[717] Several Nepalese and Tibetans who had assembled there saw the spectacle, and gTsang smyon's powers were thus displayed to the people.[718] gTsang smyon then went to the Svayambhū Stūpa.

rGod tshang ras pa ends his eighth chapter that concerned how gTsang smyon practised disciplined conduct with this account of the visit to Nepal. Before ending the chapter he compares gTsang smyon with the king of beasts—the lion—and the other beings with small animals.[719] The short ninth

710 G: 48.
711 L: 43.
712 G: 49.
713 G: 49.
714 There is a picture of this statue in Slusser 1982 vol. 2: plate 480. Wylie 1970: 15, n. 20, also identified Bod thang mgon po as the Mahākāla image in Tundikhel.
715 L: 41, 45.
716 gTsang smyon's first trip to Nepal is described in G: 49; L: 43–45; N: 11a.
717 G: 49; L: 43; N: 11a.
718 L: 43.
719 G: 49.

chapter (pp. 49–52) describes his stay at Svayambhū Stūpa and his return to Tibet. rGod tshang ras pa states that the chapter about his return describes how: "the mkha' 'gros prophesied, and the *yidam*-gods encouraged him to work for the benefit of beings."[720]

Back in Tibet

> I bow down to you [gTsang smyon]! The clouds of dualistic clinging moved in the right and left-hand channels.
> Untying the knots of dualistic grasping [the subtle wind] dissolved in the sky of the central channel. The rays of the sun of realization spread, and you displayed the inner signs outwardly for the eyes of the disciples.[721]

As mentioned previously, Lha btsun states that gTsang smyon was twenty-six years old (1477) when he returned to Tibet. Lha btsun also points out that he first stayed for about a month in Brag dmar chong lung (Red Rock of the Valley of Agates)[722] in Brin, not far from Chu bar. At that time, he had the following visions of his prototype, Milarepa:

> While abiding evenly in the state of River-flow Samādhi for about one month, he had many visionary encounters with Mila ras pa, who would sometimes teach his life story, sometimes give compassionate advice, sometimes teach dharma, sometimes display miracles, and so on.[723]

This was a premonition of one of gTsang smyon's most important endeavours, namely the compilation and propagation of the life story and songs of Milarepa.

gTsang smyon then went to La phyi where he meditated in caves associated with the cotton-clad yogin for a while.[724] Then he continued to gNya' nang (modern-day Nyalam), north-west of La phyi. In gNya' nang he stayed in the Stomach Cave (Grod phug) for a couple of weeks, meditating in complete silence.[725] When he had completed his meditation in the cave he heard that many monks were gathering nearby to perform wishing prayers to Maitreya. gTsang smyon decided to go there too. When he came to the place

[720] G: 11: *mkha' 'gros lung stan zhing / yid dam lha yis 'gro don la bskul ba'i le'u /.*
[721] N: 1b. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 2.
[722] L: 45. Spelled Brag dmar mchong lung in the text.
[723] L: 45: *zla ba gcig tsam chu bo rgyun gyi ting nge 'dzin la snyoms par bzhugs pas / rje btsun mi la ras pa de nyid res 'ga' rnam thar gsung ba / res 'ga' thugs brtse ba'i zhal bkod gnang ba / res 'ga' chos gsung ba / res rtsu 'phrul sna tshogs ston pa la sogs te mthong snang mang du byung /.* Translation based on Quintman 2006: 254.
[724] L: 46.
[725] L: 47. Spelled Brod phug in the text.

where the monks were residing the master who was in charge of discipline came to him and asked:

> "Hey you vagabond (*bya bral ba*)! Where do you come from?"
> [gTsang smyon answered:] "I come from behind."
> "Well then, are you going forward now?" [The disciplinarian asked].
> "It is not certain; it is also possible that I will go back." [gTsang smyon answered].[726]

Following this they had several discussions about the Buddhist doctrine, and when the learned monk discovered that gTsang smyon knew the Eight Thousand Verses version of the Perfection of Wisdom by heart he said:

> "This is not a vagabond but a scholar (*dge bshes*)."
> Then another master came and said, "I heard that there is a mad vagabond (*bya bral smyon pa*) around. Are you he?"
> "There are different ways of looking at it; the way I look at it you are the one who is mad."
> "Why is that?" [The master] asked.
> "Is it not crazy to do business for the sake of moving this human body with its freedoms and endowments around? I have trampled upon appearances. For achieving buddhahood in this life [I] am called crazy." [gTsang smyon] said.
> [Hearing gTsang smyon's answer], everyone burst into laughter and went away.[727]

[726] L: 47: *bya bral ba khyod gang nas yin zer / ngas rgyab nas yin byas pas / 'o na da mdun du 'gro 'am zer ba la / nges pa med logs su 'gro ba yang srid byas.*
[727] L: 47–48: *'di bya bral bar mi 'dug dge bshes cig 'dug zer ro / slob dpon gzhan zhig byung nas bya bral smyon pa cig 'dug zer ba khyed yin nam zer ba la / mthong tshul mi 'dra ngas ltas na khyed smyo 'dug byas pas / khong na re de'i rgyu mtshan zer ngas dal 'byor gyi mi lus thob nas / mi lus bskor phyir du mtshong ba 'di smyon pa ma yin nam / nga snang ba la thog rdzis byas / tshe 'dir sangs rgyas sgrub pa la smyo zer ba gsung pas / kun rgad mo theg ge log song /.*

Chapter 7: A Mad Yogin Turns the Wheel of Dharma

Although gTsang smyon had debated with learned scholars, and impressed people with his knowledge and miraculous powers on several occasions, he had not yet started to teach in any formal way. His behavior and provocations might be seen as some kind of teaching in themselves, but they were also a kind of practice. At this point, while gTsang smyon was in his late twenties, perhaps twenty-seven or twenty-eight, he started to teach in a more traditional way. He had an inner realization of the profound meaning of the Buddhist doctrine, which he had refined and tested thoroughly by means of disciplined conduct. The time was thus ripe to communicate his understanding to others. gTsang smyon started to express his insight through spiritual songs (*mgur*) and he also gave teachings (*khrid*) and empowerments (*dbang*). Moreover, he started to compose and print texts. An important result of these activities is that he started to amass disciples.

gTsang smyon Starts to Compose Texts and Sing Songs of Realization

Having explained the nature of his madness to the monks in gNya' nang, gTsang smyon returned to Chu bar. He stayed in 'Bri lce phug (Cave of the 'Bri's Tongue)[728] for a while to practise meditation for the benefit of others. While meditating in the cave, gTsang smyon had the following visionary encounter with his *yidam* Hevajra.[729]

> Then, at dawn, while [gTsang smyon] was in a state where Clear Light and sleep mixed, he saw the complete maṇḍala of Hevajra in the sky in front of him. The main figure had nine heads and eighteen hands, and in each hand he held different hand symbols and weapons.
>
> [Hevajra] said, "Son of a noble family, now since the time for helping others has arrived, you must also compose texts about Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara, and so on!" Hearing this [gTsang smyon] woke up, and following

[728] 'Bri is the female of the yak species. The cave is famous as the place where Milarepa passed away.
[729] N: 11a.

the prophecy, which he received that morning, he wrote stanzas that contained a hymn-like description of Hevajra.[730]

This vision was the starting point of gTsang smyon's successful career as a writer of religious texts.[731]

When summer arrived, gTsang smyon went to La phyi where he practised for the benefit of others. He also embellished a footprint of Milarepa, situated above bDud 'dul phug (the Māra Subjugation Cave), with gold. As he did that, the earth quaked three times and the syllables *oṃ āḥ hūṃ* rose forth from the footprint.[732]

It was at this period that gTsang smyon's spiritual songs (*mgur*) are presented for the first time in the *rnam thars*.[733] According to the *Heart of the Sun*, he sang his first song shortly after the vision of Hevajra. While staying in the La phyi area, he expressed his realization in "this great song of the essential meaning of the great vehicle."[734]

E ma ho! Blessed Hevajra
is one's own mind in its primordial purity.
It is in a state free of complexity
such as empty or not-empty.

Previously I did not know
that self-arisen wisdom of simplicity,
and by meditating on the path
I was confused.
So I took my confusion to be meditation.

Now I am a meditator
free of conceptual thought.

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[730] N: 11a–11b: *de nas tho rangs mnal dang 'od gsal 'dres pa'i ngang la / mdun gyi namkhar [nam mkhar] dges pa rdo rje'i dkyil 'khor rten dang brten par bcas pa gzigs shing / de yang gtso bo dbu dgu / phyag bcwo brgyad pa / phyag mtshan mtshon cha sna tshogs bsnams shing / zhal nas / rigs kyi bu da ni 'gro don dus la bab pas / dges pa rdo rje dang / 'khor lo* (11 b) *bde mchog sogs kyi yig cha yang rtsoms shig / gsung ba'i ngang la mngal sad cing / de'i nang par lung bstan ltar / dges pa rdo rje'i mngon rtogs tshigs bcad ma zin bris su mdzad do /.* Similar passages are found in G: 51 and L: 50.

[731] Almost every important act that gTsang smyon did was preceded by a series of visions. His mother had many visions that foretold his birth, and later gTsang smyon himself had many visionary encounters that guided and inspired him. The composition of a text about gTsang smyon's *yidam* Hevajra is also mentioned by Lha btsun and rGod tshang ras pa (G: 50–51; L: 50). Stearns [Kalnins] calls the text *Kye rdor mngon rtogs* (*A Daily-Practice Text of Hevajra*) and she mentions that none of gTsang smyon's Hevajra writings are presently available (Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 31). It should be kept in mind that Lha btsun mentions that he composed a text at an earlier point too. The text in question is *rDo rje tshig rkang ma rig mun sel*, which he wrote in Tsāri when he was about twenty-four years old (L: 31). More information on gTsang smyon's works will be given in Chapter 9.

[732] L: 51; N: 11b. The footprint is still shown to visitors according to Huber (1997: 264, 282: n. 117 and n. 118). See also Quintman 2006: 256.

[733] As noted earlier, no songs are included in the *Lion of Faith*.

[734] G: 52; *theg chen snying po don gyi mgur chen 'di.*

When you want to meditate,
meditation is obscured by meditation.
When you realize non-meditation,
everything appears as meditation.

Ordinary people are fettered
by wisdom itself.
On a yogi
the five poisons appear as ornaments.

The nature of dharmas
which is without birth or cessation
was not known by the wise.
So I asked the idiots.
Nor did they know,
so I asked the corpse in the cemetery.
His explanation is the nature of dharmas.

The meditation experience
of a madman in the snows of La phyi
is expressed in the letters E-Wam.
Isn't it marvelous!

E-Wam.[735]

It was also at this time that gTsang smyon started to gather disciples. Some of his early songs were directed to his disciple, Rin chen dpal bzang, who is called a heart-son (*thugs sras*) by Lha btsun.[736] Rin chen dpal bzang eventually became gTsang smyon's foremost disciple, and gTsang smyon sang him four songs of instructions on how to search for the mind.[737] The first song he sang to him is rendered as follows:

Homage to the guru and vajra-ḍakini!

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[735] Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 12; G: 52; L: 82; *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka* (1b): *e ma ho / / bcom ldan dges pa rdo rje ni / / gdod nas dag pa'i rang sems yin / / de ni stong dang stong min te / / spros pa med pa'i ngang la gnas / / spros bral rang byung ye shes de / / sngon chad ma shes lam bsgoms pas / / 'khrul pas 'khrul pa sgom par go / / da ni sgom mkhan blo dang bral / / sgom par 'dod tshe sgom gyi sgom de sgribs / / sgom med rtogs tshe thams cad sgom du shar / / so so skye bo ye shes rang gis bcings / / rnal 'byor pa la dug lnga rgyan du shar / / skye 'gag med pa chos kyi gnas lugs de / / mkhas pas mi shes skugs pa dag la dris / / des kyang mi shes dur khrod ro la dris / / de yis bshad pa chos kyi gnas lugs yin / / smyon pa la phyi gangs la bsgoms pa'i nyams / e baṃ / / yi ger bkod pa e ma mtshar / / e baṃ / /.*

[736] L: 50. He was the first to receive the blessing of gTsang smyon's lineage (G: 111–113) and was sometimes called Thag pa or Thag pa Rin chen dpal bzang. According to Gene Smith (personal communication to Stearns [Kalnins]), Thag pa is probably referring to his home, the Thakali region of Nepal, north of Pokhara (Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 88–89, n. 22).

[737] G 58–61; L: 50–51, 53 and 54–55. These songs are also included in the *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 1b–3a. In the latter text, the heart-son is called bKra shis Rin chen dpal bzang. A colored woodcut print of him is included in the *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka* (page 1b).

Incomparable, kind root-lama,
bestow the profound and excellent paths
of the perfect view when someone requests it from you!
And bestow all accomplishments!

Yidam-gods and ḍākinīs together with Dharma Protectors,
eliminate obstacles and unfavourable conditions!

The great purpose of my prayer is that
the supreme nectar of the speech of the glorious lama
will brighten the golden goblet of my mind, now.

Because I fear that the rust of forgetfulness
will obscure it,
I am writing down [these] letters.

If one explains according to the instruction of the guru
[these words] are [for] worthy ones,
and should be kept secret from inferior people.

I beg you masters of dharma, ḍākinīs,
brother and sister protectors,
to grant your permission!

I, a son of the the bKa' rgyud family-holders,
enter the path of the blessing-lineage
in the wide plains of the equality of existence and peace.

Riding the horse of unchanging devotion and respect,
with the bow and arrow of the instructions of the Aural Transmission,
filled with a fathom of oral pith instructions,
[I] make the horse ride at the full speed of accomplished practice.
[I then] shoot an arrow of self-cognizant wisdom.
The mind is the unborn ground of everything—samsara and nirvana!
Fortunate one, stick to the target!

If you do not find [it] in the symbol,
a burning OṂ letter from below—clarity,
a HAṂ letter descending from above—bliss,
from the place in between bliss and clarity,
is the non-conceptual—awareness, emptiness, clarity, mind
—search for that!

When you find it, stick to the target!
If you do not find [it], meditate with vitality and exertion again!
By this method the nature will be seen.

E waṃ.[738]

[738] *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 2a: *na mo gu ru badzra ḍa ki ni / yang dag lta ba'i lam rab zab mo rnams / / gang gis khyod la gsol btab dus der rtsol (stsol) / / mnyam med*

Political Involvement

At that time the son of Nam mkha' stob rgyal, the leader of Tsha mda', passed away. gTsang smyon was invited to gNya' nang to assist his patron in his time of grief.[739] When gTsang smyon arrived in gNya' nang, many people, both from the area itself and from other places, had gathered to offer gifts in honor of the dead son.[740] The most important of the many prominent guests was the myriarch of Northern La stod (La stod byang/Byang), Nam mkha' rdo rje, who had traveled there from Ngam ring, the capital of the district of Byang, accompanied by many followers.[741] The king is praised as a patron and disciple of Thang stong rgyal po in the latter's hagiographies, but according to the texts about gTsang smyon he had a less attractive side as well.[742] According to the *rnam thar*s, Northern La stod had occupied Southern La stod (La stod lho/Lho) and gTsang smyon felt that they had no right to do so.

> The Lord [gTsang smyon] thought, "Since the southerners (*lho pa*) have their own [land], it is unsuitable for the northerners (*byang pa*) to rule [here]." Then [gTsang smyon] scolded the northerners many times with things that were unsuitable [to hear], and he repeatedly pointed out their shortcomings. The [assembled] persons in the rows became scared and astonished. The northerners became angry and embarrassed but did not know what to do. The ruler [Nam mkha' rdo rje] with his great brilliance had no courage to do anything in the rows [of people]. He said, "Yogin! You are an excellent siddha! I invite you to my place and at that time I will offer you service."[743]

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drin can rtsa ba'i bla ma dang / / dngos grub kun rtsol (stsol) bar chad 'gal rkyen sel / / yid dam lha dang mkha' 'gro chos skyong rnams / / bdag nyid gsol ba 'debs pa'i don chen ni / / dpal ldan bla ma'i gsung gi bdud rtsi mchog/ / bdag blo'i gser skyogs da lta gsal ba rnams / / rjed ngas g.ya' yis sgribs dogs bsam pa yis / / yig ger dkod cing bskal dman la gsang nas / / skal ldan rnams la bla ma'i bka' bzhin du / ston par byed na chos bdag mkha' 'gro yis / / gnang bar mdzod cig dur gsol lcam dral rnams / / bka' rgyud rigs 'dzin bu rgyud nga / / srid zhi mnyam nyid thang yangs la / / byin brlabs rgyud pa'i lam la zhugs / / mos gus 'gyur med rta la zhon / / snyan rgyud gdams ngag mda' gzhu la / / zhal gdams gnad kyi mdom bkang nas / / sgrub pa nyams len gyi rta rgyugs byed / / rang rig ye shes mda' cig brdeg / / 'khor 'das kun gzhi skye med sems / / skal ldan khyod kyis 'ben du tshugs / / rgya la rnyed par ma gyur na / / 'og nas 'bar ba'i oṃ yig gsal / / stengs nas 'bab pa'i haṃ yig bde / / bde gsal bar nas mi rtogs pa'i / / gsal stong rig pa sems de tshol / / rnyed par gyur tshe 'ben du tshugs / / ma rnyed slar yang srogs rtsol bsgoms / / thabs 'dis gnas lugs mthong bar 'gyur / / e baṃ / /. The same song is also found in G: 58–59; L: 50–51.

[739] As seen above, gTsang smyon had impressed Nam mkha' stob rgyal whom he met while traveling towards Chu bar, and the leader had become one of his patrons, see above (p. 140).

[740] This episode is rendered in G: 61–63; L: 51–53; N: 11b–12a.

[741] He was the successor and son of Nam rgyal grags bzang (1395–1475), Stearns 2007: 582, n. 1119.

[742] Stearns 2007: 582, n. 1119.

[743] N: 11b: *rje'i thug la / lho pa rang gi mi yod bzhin / byang pas skyong ba 'di mi rigs dgongs nas / byang pa la mi 'tsham pa'i bka' skyon mang po mdzad cing / mtshang la 'phog pa mang po gsungs pas / gral pa rnams 'jigs shing ngo mtshar bar gyur 'dug / byang pa rnams khros shing ngo tsha bas ci bya tshad rlag kyang / dpon de zil che bas gral du ci yang*

As might be expected, the invitation was a trap. gTsang smyon went to the camp of the northerners they "bound him with ropes and started to beat him with weapons and so forth, and did many things."[744]

The northerners could not hurt gTsang smyon who displayed his miraculous powers and became invulnerable. As usual he felt compassion towards the wicked people who wanted to kill him, and after they realized that they could not harm him they began to develop faith and respect for the mad yogin instead. The myriarch Nam mkha' rdo rje eventually became gTsang smyon's patron and "fulfilled [gTsang smyon's] every command."[745]

gTsang smyon then returned to La phyi where he continued his practice. During this period he performed several miracles. One time he and some monks survived an earthquake thanks to his miraculous powers[746] and another time he miraculously survived a flood.[747] He also sat in the middle of a fire a couple of times without getting burned.[748]

Having displayed how he remained unharmed by rocks, water and fire to the people in the La phyi, Chu bar and gNya' nang areas, he decided to go to Ti se.

Before leaving, he told his disciples to stay in the area and practise for one year. gTsang smyon, who was now thirty years old (1481), took his brother, dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, Rin chen dpal bzang and three other disciples with him as companions, and departed.[749]

Traveling to Mustang, Ti se, Gung thang and rTsa

While gTsang smyon and his companions traveled towards Ti se, his reputation had already reached the ears of the kings and leaders of the areas he passed through. rGod tshang ras pa describes how the king of Gung thang and his subjects had heard that gTsang smyon had survived the attack from the leader of Northern La stod. They said, "There is a mad yogin who remained unhurt by weapons at gNya' nang and he is rapidly approaching Ti se."[750]

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byed ma spobs te / rnal 'byor pa khyod grub thob khyad par can cig 'dug pas / nged rang gi sar spyan 'dren byed cing zhabs tog de dus 'bul.

744 N: 12a: *zhags pas 'khyig cing / mtshon cha brdeg pa la sogs mang po byas shing /.*

745 N: 12a: *ci gsung bka' bzhin sgrub par gyur to /.*

746 N: 12b.

747 N: 12b.

748 N: 13a.

749 L: 54, 55. His brother is not mentioned by name by Lha btsun, but dNgos grub dpal 'bar mentions that his brother was present at Kailāsa (N: 13b). Based on dNgos grub dpal 'bar's account I conclude that his brother was one of the five companions.

750 G: 67: *gnya' nang phyogs na mtshon gyid mi tshugs pa'i rnal 'byor pa smyon pa gcig 'dug / myur por ti se phyogs pa 'byon par 'dug zer ba /.* This phrase is also translated in Vitali 1996: 532, n. 907.

During his trip to Ti se another famous mad yogin, dBus smyon Kun dga' bzang po (1458–1532), joined company with them.[751] According to the *rnam thars*, Gu ge and gLo bo smon thang (Mustang) were at war, so the colorful party traveled through very dangerous areas.[752] On the way, he was invited to gLo (Mustang) and the ruler of gLo, bKra shis mgon, treated him with great respect.[753] Gene Smith has translated this section of the *Heart of the Sun*, and the short passage illustrates both the violent times and gTsang smyon's unusual behavior.

> At that time the Lord [gTsang smyon] and his disciples had gone to kLo bo [gLo bo] sMon thang. The sMon thang people had attached the heads of many slain men of Gu ge to the beams of the city gates. The Lord took into his hands the brains, crawling with maggots and rotting, that had fallen to the ground and ate the flesh and brains. Thereupon, he said to the many people gathered about: "if you wish miraculous realization (*dngos grub*) I shall give it to you." Those who ate the spoonful of brains he offered became wealthy. The ruler, bKra shis mgon, treated him with great honor and respect. A monk called Grags mchog was sent to guide the master and disciples along the road. At that time, kLo bo [gLo bo] and Gu ge were mutually hostile; and there was great fear for the safety of the road. At mDo krag of Bye ma g.yung drung, many horsemen were approaching...[754]

Having gained yet another powerful patron, the ruler of gLo, bKra shis mgon, gTsang smyon and his companions continued towards Ti se. When they arrived at the holy mountain, that just like Tsāri and La phyi is associated with the tantric deity Cakrasaṃvara, they circumambulated it and gTsang smyon left his footprint in a stone.[755]

On their way back from the holy mountain, gTsang smyon visited rDzong dkar, the capital of Gung thang. The kings of Gung thang were held in high esteem, since they were seen as descendents of the old Tibetan kings. gTsang smyon entered the palace of the king, Khri rNam rgyal lde (1422–1502), and no one could prevent his entrance.[756] According to dNgos grub dpal 'bar, the retinue of the king became so frightened when they saw

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[751] G: 67. dBus smyon's presence is not mentioned by Lha btsun or dNgos grub dpal 'bar.

[752] G: 67. According to Roberto Vitali, the war took place during the reign of the king of Gu ge bLo bzang rab brtan (Vitali 1996: 533).

[753] bKra shis mgon was known as the great (i.e. oldest) ruler (*sde pa chen po*) of bLo. He was on the throne about 1465–1480 and died 1489. Jackson, D. 1984: 123; Petech 1978: 320.

[754] Smith 2001: 68–69; G: 67–68: *de dus su rje dpon slob rnams klo'o smon thang du phebs tshe / klo bos gu ge'i mi mang po gsad (bsad) pa'i mgo rnams sgo snya la rtags pa / glad (klad) pa 'bus g.yeng zhing (shing) rul nas sa la lhung ba rjes phyag du bzhes nas sha dang klad pa bzhes tshe / mi mang po 'dus pa rnams la dngos grub dgos na sbyin gyi gsung dpon po bkra shis mgon kyis (gyis) bsnyen bkur bzang po phul / grags mchog bya ba'i gra pa cig lam sna la btang dpon slob 'ga' shas kyi phebs / de dus klo bo dang gu ge me ma 'cham pas lam la 'jigs nyen che ba las bye ma g.yu drung (g.yung drung) gi mdo krag bya ba na rta pa mang po yong zhing 'dug.*

[755] N: 13b.

[756] The name of the king is mentioned in *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 4a

gTsang smyon that they ran away. The king himself developed faith in gTsang smyon, however, and offered him beer.[757] gTsang smyon had thus gained yet another powerful patron, and he became one of the main teachers of the king.[758]

gTsang smyon continued to walk in the footsteps of his great role-model Milarepa. While in the area of Mang yul Gung thang he meditated in the so-called Six Forts (rDzong drug) for three years.[759] These caves were famous as Milarepa's former places of retreat, and gTsang smyon wanted to practise there too. During this period he also visited the birth-place of Milarepa and meditated in another cave where Milarepa had meditated, the Cave of the Footprint (rKang tshug phug), both places being situated in rTsa.[760]

A Mad Yogin Called into Question

While dwelling in the Cave of the Footprint he was supported by the king of Gung thang, Khri rNam rgyal lde, and his elder son Nor bu lde (1450–1485). However, the other son of the king, bSam grub lde (1459–1505), was not yet convinced that gTsang smyon was a genuine yogin. The prince (bSam grub lde) suspected that gTsang smyon might be a charlatan.

> "The yogin is skilled in scripture and logic, and has perfectly mastered charisma (*gzi brjid*) and magical transformation. He seems to be pretty good in his ability at manipulating the phenomenal world. But his careless actions are beyond reckoning, and I don't know what they are. Therefore, because it's important in this evil, degenerate time to test all yogis and ascertain if they're good or bad, I will test him a while."[761]

Having thought in this way, bSam grub lde decided not to show any respect to gTsang smyon. gTsang smyon noticed that the prince did not honor him, and wondered if they had a karmic bond or not. He decided to check if the

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[757] N: 13b. Their meeting is depicted in more detail in G: 69–70. In rGod tshang ras pa's account dBus smyon figures (G: 70).

[758] A chronicle of the royal house of Gung thang by Kaḥ thog rig 'dzin tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1755) mentions Bo dong chos rje phyogs las rnam rgyal (1375–1451), dPal ldan sangs rgyas (1391–1455) and gTsang smyon as being the main teachers of Khri rNam rgyal lde (Ehrhard 2000: 13).

[759] For a study of the Six Forts and maps describing where they are situated, see Quintman 2008.

[760] N: 13b.

[761] Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 98, slightly altered. *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 4b: *rnal 'byor pa lung dang rigs pa la mkhas shing / gzi brjid dang rdzu 'phrul phun tshogs thob pa / snang srid zil gyis gnon nus pa bzang bzang 'dra ba cig 'dug ste / mdzad spyod gya ma tho bsam las 'das pa cig 'dug pa dang / gang yin mi shes pas dus ngan snyigs ma'i dus rnal 'byor pa kun la'ang bzang ngan rtag spyad pa gal che bar 'dug pas /.* The same passage is included in G: 73. The introductory episode is not depicted by Lha btsun.

prince had any faith in him, so he went to bSam grub lde and requested a donation of food.[762]

> At that the king [bSam grub lde] thought, "The uneducated common people, the yogins who come from all over the kingdom, and the scholars and monks from my own land who are learned in sūtra and tantra, are in agreement that he is a good yogin. My father the king and my elder brother both offer homage and service to this yogin, so he is being supported, and is not in hardship. But he may exchange (what I give him) for something else, and trade it for an article he'll carry with him, or else it's possible that he is testing me. So I should employ the weapons of insulting words to test if this yogin is good or bad."[763]

bSam grub lde then praised Milarepa and started to insult gTsang smyon.

> You withstood the hardship of drinking (only) water, and perfected austerity.
> Your body burned with the heat of bliss, and on your form a few cotton clothes you wore.
> You realized the meaning of equanimity, and clear light was for you an unbroken stream.
> Respectfully I prostrate at the feet of Milarepa!
>
> As for you, madman and bum, you can't bear hardship; you're lazy.
> Your being is immature; you're a fake.
> The thought of approaching death does not occur to you, and through various and sundry defilements, you are a desecrator of the especially holy site of Mila.
> O, great Reverend Lord, have pity on this one![764]

In response to bSam grub lde's many accusations gTsang smyon sang a song (*mgur*) that resembled the song that Milarepa sang to Dam pa sangs rgyas, which was cited at the beginning of this dissertation. According to the texts, gTsang smyon and Milarepa thus shared the same fate of being misunder-

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[762] G: 73.

[763] Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 98–99, slightly altered. *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 4b: *der rgyal po'i bsam pa la / sbyangs pa med pa'i so so skye bo rnams dang / rgyal khams nas yongs pa'i rnal 'byor pa rnams dang / rang gi yul gyi mdo rgyud la sbyangs pa'i mkhas btsun rnams zhal 'thun par / rnal 'byor pa bzang po yin zer gyin 'dug rnal 'byor pa 'di la rgyal po yab dang gcen gnyis kyis / bsnyan bkur zhabs tog phul bas / rkyen cig gyis gsungs pas / 'tsho bas nyon mongs pa ni med te / 'dis dngos po gzhan du sgyur te khyer chas kyi nor du sgril lam / yang na nga'i tshod dgam dag kyang srid pas / rnal 'byor pa bzang ngan rtag pa la tshig rtsub kyi mtshon cha 'phen dgos snyam nas*. A similar passage is found in G: 73–74.

[764] Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 99, slightly altered; G: 74; *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 4b–5a: *dka' thub chu mthung dka' spyad mtha' ru phyin / / bde drod lus 'bar sku la ras 'ga' gsol / / mnyam nyid don rtogs 'od gsal rgyun mi 'chad / / mi la ras pa'i zhabs la gus la gus phyag 'tshal / khyed ni smyon pa za ldom mkhan / / dka' spyad mi nus snyom las can/ / rang rgyud ma smin tshul 'chos mkhan / / 'chi ba yong snyam med pa des / / mi la'i gnas chen khyad par can / / sna tshogs grib ni du ma yis / / 'bags par byed mkhan de nyid la/ / rje btsun chen pos thugs rjes zung / /.*

stood due to their unusual appearance. Ilze Maruta Stearns has translated gTsang smyon's "great song" (*mgur chen*) and since the song is of relevance for the present study I will quote some sections of it at length.

> The Great Destroyer of Delusion, the Father Siddha, in answer to the king's words, sang this great song of refuting errant argument and recognizing faults to be attainments, which is like the essence of nectar which cures the illness of the five poisons or a wish-fulfilling jewel which effortlessly yields all ultimate and temporary needs and desires.
>
> [...]
>
> Hey, listen, son of the Gods!
> See if I, a mad yogi of the kingdom, soliciting donations of food and drink, have correctly understood what the king has just said, so unclear whether you would give or not give, that it really makes me laugh!
>
> [...]
>
> My lineage is replete
> with the likes of madmen and bums!
> I am the son of a father of fine lineage;
> I am the holder of a lineage of madmen and the like!
> So, were I to sing a song of how the king is right
> about all the stories of madness and the like,
> the noble Tathāgatas with their retinues,
> smiling in wonder and joy,
> would finally burst out in laughter:
> such marvellous madness as this!
>
> I am mad with the view of unity beyond extremes.
> I am mad with meditation which doesn't grasp at clarity and emptiness.
> I am mad with conduct which overwhelms dread [*nyams nga thog Brdzis*].
> I am mad with the ground beyond all exaggeration.
> I am mad with the path of abandoning sin and practising virtue.
> I am mad with the fruits of self-recognition.
>
> Having madness as the basis,
> yet again, shaken by demons,
> I am mad.
> The demon of the bKa' brgyud blessings
> has possessed me.
> The demoness of the ḍākinīs' enlightened actions
> is at work.
> The ghoul of contentment has bored into my heart.
> The witch of wisdom bolsters the basis of my mind.
>
> Driven by burning experiential realization,
> suddenly I rose from the bed of desire and attachment.
> Throwing off the clothes

of propensity toward the two obscurations,
stainless awareness dashed around naked.
Shamelessly the six senses were scattered behind.
I bashed together the pots
of the eight worldly attitudes.
I leapt into the measureless abyss.
The head of the five poisonous passions was smashed.
I lost my worldly senses of subject and object!
If that were the kind of madness,
it would be good if even the king himself were mad.[765]

gTsang smyon then continues to explain why prince bSam grub lde is right in accusing him of being a "bum" (*za ldom mkhan*), "unable to bear hardship" (*dka' sbyad mi nus mkhan*), "lazy" (*snyoms las mkhan*), "immature" (*rang rgyud ma smin*), a fake (*tshul 'chos mkhan*) and so forth. Just as when he explained his madness, he used each negative word in a positive way, and thus managed to show that his way of being mad and lazy and so forth was not conventional.

When gTsang smyon had sung this long song, of which only a short extract was presented above, bSam grub lde became devoted and full of faith. "I abused him and in return the master yogin displayed his qualities. What great kindness! How wonderful!" he said.[766]

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[765] Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 99–102; *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 5a–5b: *pha grub thob 'khrul zhig gi zhal nas / rgyal po'i tshig de'i lan gdab pa'i phyir du / dug lnga'i nad sel bdud rtsi'i bcud dam / gnas skabs dang mthar thug gi dgos 'dod 'bad med du 'byung ba / yid bzhin gyi nor bu rtsod zlog sum 'byin pa skyon yon tan du ngo sprod pa'i mgur chen 'di gsungs so / [...] kye nyon dang lha yi sras / / nga rgyal khams kyi rnal 'byor smyon pa yis / / bza' btung zas 'brel blangs pa las / / ster dang mi ster mi gsal bar / / gyi na bzhad gad don dam gyi / / rgyal pos lan cig smras pa de // ma nor legs par go yam ltos / / [...] smyon pa za ldom la sogs kun / / nga yi rgyud pa 'di la tshad / / nga ni rgyud bzang pha yi bu / / smyo sogs rgyud pa 'dzin mkhan yin / / de phyir smyo sogs rnam thar kun / / rgyal po bden tshul glur blangs nas / bde gshegs rigs 'dzin 'khor bcas rnams / / ngo mtshar dges pa'i 'dzum mul nas / tha mar bzhad mo 'chor ba yi / ya mtshan smyo lugs 'di 'dra yod / / nga mtha' bral zung 'jug lta bas smyo / / gsal stong 'dzin med sgom pas smyo / / nyams nga thog brdzis spyod pas smyo / / sgro btags kun bral gzhi yis smyo / / sdig spong dge sgrub lam gyis smyo / / rang ngo 'phrod pa'i 'bras bus smyo / / gzhi la smyo ba yod bzhin du / / slar yang gdon gyi bskyod nas smyo / / pho gdon bka' rgyud byin brlabs zhugs / / mo gdon mkha' 'gros 'phrin las bsgrubs / / snying du blo bde'i 'gong po tshud / / blo rtsa ye shes dre mos bteg / / nyams rtogs 'bar bas rkyen slang nas / / zhen chags mal nas lkogs langs byas / / sgrib gnyis bag chags gos phud nas / / rig pa dri med gcer bur rgyugs / / khrel med tshogs drug lhug par bzhag / / chos brgyad rdza la gya brdungs byas / / mtho dman med pa'i g.yang la 'chongs / / nyon mongs dug lnga'i mgo bo chag / / gzung 'dzin 'khor ba'i dran pa stor / / smyo lugs de 'dra byung gyur na / / rgyal po rang yang smyo na legs /*. This section of the song is included in G: 75–76. The full song is translated in Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 98–113. The entire song is found in G: 74–81; L: 69–75 and the *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 3a–8a.

[766] *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 8a: *ngas smad ra btang pa rnams / / bla ma rnal 'byor pas yon tan du ngo sprod pa bka' drin shin tu che zhing ngo mtshar zer ba la /*.

gTsang smyon continued with his explication and said that "even all the qualities of the Buddhas appear as faults to those with wrong views who have not trained their minds in the ordinary path."[767]

He then summarized his opinion as follows, "For those who do not understand all phenomena (*dharma*), samsara appears. But if one understands, it is the great bliss of nirvana from the very beginning."[768]

bSam grub lde was very impressed by gTsang smyon's great knowledge and insight and he promised to support him and his disciples in the future.[769] In return for supporting him he requested gTsang smyon to perform wishing prayers on his behalf, and he also asked for a protector practice that he could perform to obtain protection.[770]

gTsang smyon had now erased the last traces of doubt in the mind of the prince and was hereafter firmly supported by the king of Gung thang, his two sons and their retinue. However, other people of the area still entertained doubts about gTsang smyon. While he was teaching the Great Vehicle (*theg pa chen po, Mahāyāna*) to a large number of people, some slandered him and said, "In general, now is not the time to practise and meditate according to the Secret Mantra; and in particular, this kind of [explanation of] the view, meditation and action is not taught by the Buddha (*thub pa*)..."[771] gTsang smyon invited some of the people who "were devoted to the inferior vehicles"[772] to a debate and refuted their wrong views by means of logical reasoning and scriptural citations. He then sang "The Great Song of the True Meaning—The Roar of the Selfless Lion that Subdues and Frightens the Small Prey of the Inferior Vehicle."[773]

gTsang smyon's age when he sang these songs is not stated in the hagiographies. But since Lha btsun stated that he was thirty (1481) when he went to Ti se, and then states that he spent three years meditating in the Six Forts after that trip, he was probably about thirty-four (1485) when he sang the songs.[774]

767 *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 8b: *ma shes na sangs rgyas kyi yon tan thams cad kyang / / so skyes lam la blo ma sbyangs pa dang / log lta can rnams la skyon du snang ste /.*

768 *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 8b: *chos thams cad ma rtogs pa rnams la 'khor bar snang / rtogs na ye gdod ma nas mya ngan las 'das pa'i bde ba chen po yin /.*

769 *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 8b.

770 *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 8b.

771 *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 9b: *spyir gyis da lta gsang sngags dang sgom pa nyams su len pa'i dus ma yin zhing / / khyad par lta sgom spyod pa 'di 'dra thub pas ma gsungs pas kham ches zer lkog lab mang du byung ba las.*

772 *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 9b: *theg dman la mos pa'i gang zag.*

773 *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 9b: *theg dman gyi ri dags phra mo rnams skrag cing zil gyis gnon par byed pa bdag med seng ge'i ngar skad nges pa don gyi mgur chen 'di gsungs so /.* The song is also rendered in G: 85–86.

774 L: 54, 60. One may assume that the journey to Kailāsa and back took about a year, since he visited Mustang on the way. As will be seen below, Lha btsun later states that he was thirty-five when he reached Tsāri (L: 90).

It is noteworthy that the mad and provocative behavior of gTsang smyon gradually loses prominence in the *rnam thars*. gTsang smyon's role changes from an unknown mad yogin to a famous siddha.[775] As a siddha, he still acts in a mad way from time to time, but the extremely bizarre and provocative behavior which started when he left dPal 'khor chos lde is only occasionally mentioned in the texts.

Composing the *Life* and *Songs* of Milarepa

dNgos grub dpal 'bar explains how the king of Gung thang did not want gTsang smyon to leave the Mang yul gung thang area. gTsang smyon therefore had to sneak away without anyone noticing. He then went to his favorite places La phyi and Tsāri again. After having meditated for a year in La phyi, at the age of thirty-five (1486)[776] he reached Tsāri.[777] There he meditated for three years, and while he was there he also composed some texts that were later incorporated in his Aural Transmission compilation.

At the age of thirty-eight (1489)[778] he decided to return to La phyi. There he began what was to become one of his most important deeds, the compilation and printing of the life story and song collection of his great role model, Milarepa. All three *rnam thars* about gTsang smyon describe—in a rather detailed way—why and how the life story and the collection of songs of Milarepa were made.[779] According to these accounts, gTsang smyon's intention was to popularize and spread Milarepa's life story and thereby benefit all beings.[780] It should be noted that Milarepa's life story was completed in 1488 according to the colophon of the text itself.[781] This information contradicts Lha btsun's account, which states that gTsang smyon started the work in 1489 and completed it after two years.[782] This would mean that Milarepa's life story was completed in 1491. Having successfully completed the printing of the Milarepa texts, gTsang smyon dispersed many copies of the texts

[775] This has also been noted by Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 33.
[776] L: 90.
[777] N: 14b.
[778] L: 93.
[779] G: 130; 137–153; L: 97–98; N: 16a–16b.
[780] Andrew Quintman recently made a thorough examination of these sections of the *rnam thars* of gTsang smyon (Quintman 2006: 195–209). Also Stearns [Kalnins] 1985 has investigated how gTsang smyon composed the *Life* and *Songs* of Milarepa (Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 66–96). More information on gTsang smyon's literary works will be given in Chapter 9.
[781] It is written in the colophon that the work was finished on the eighth day of the eighth lunar month of the year called *phur bu*, the Earth-Monkey year, equivalent to 1488. gTsang smyon 1979: 199; gTsang smyon 1991: 874.
[782] Lha btsun states that gTsang smyon was thirty-eight (1489), L: 93; and that the work took two years, L: 98.

all over Tibet.[783] gTsang smyon thus contributed a great deal in making Milarepa widely famous in Tibet and elsewhere.

rGod tshang ras pa mentions that Kun tu bzang mo became gTsang smyon's disciple during this period. Kun tu bzang mo also became his female companion and consort, and remained with him for the rest of his life.[784]

Wanderings and Retreats

The following year gTsang smyon went to gLo bo sMon thang (Mustang) for a second time to collect alms. There he met the so-called "middle ruler" of gLo bo, A Seng rdo rje brtan pa (died c. 1496), who had succeeded bKra shis mgon on the throne.[785] In gLo bo, gTsang smyon impressed the ruler and his followers by defeating the local *dge bshes* in debate while drinking copious quantities of beer.[786]

gTsang smyon then went back to La phyi where he went into a retreat for three years. During this time he wrote many texts that later became part of his Aural Transmission compilation.[787] Continuing his itinerant life-style, at age forty-three (1494) he went to nearby Chu bar where he meditated for yet another year.[788] In Chu bar he gave complete instructions and empowerments of the Aural Transmission, and the next summer he went to Crystal Cave (Shel phug) where he gave blessings, teachings and empowerments to many people.[789]

gTsang smyon had assembled a great number of disciples and patrons at this point and he decided that he should go to whitewash the Svayambhū Stūpa in Nepal.[790] Before he departed for Nepal he went to mKhar kha to perform ceremonies for his mother who had passed away.[791] In mKhar kha he also started to amass the requisites needed for whitewashing the Stūpa. He set off towards Nepal in the autumn, and on the way he went to sKyid grong. He also visited rDzong dkar and there he met the king of Gung thang (Khri rnam rgyal lde), his sons and their retinue.[792] gTsang smyon's disciples

[783] N: 16b.
[784] Kun tu bzang mo's biography is given in G: 140–142. She was one of the key figures in promoting gTsang smyon's lineage and teachings after he had passed away.
[785] G: 153; N: 17a. He is mentioned as A seng in (G: 153, 155). For further information about this ruler see Jackson, D. 1984: 124.
[786] Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 34; G: 155.
[787] N: 17a.
[788] N: 17b; Lha btsun gives information about his age (L: 100). This is one of the few dated events in the *Heart of the Sun*. The date given in the text is the fifteenth day of the first Hor month in the Rabbit Year, which would make it 1495 (G: 171).
[789] N: 17b.
[790] N: 17b.
[791] L: 101. This information is not provided in the *Lion of Faith*.
[792] N: 18a.

went ahead and he stayed for one-and-a-half months to bestow empowerments, teachings and blessings on the people of Gung thang. While staying there he met the female Vārāhī incarnation, Kun dga' bzang mo, whom he had encountered on his way to Tsāri in his early twenties.[793] The venerable female lama offered him a rosary made of coral, an incident which gTsang smyon found very auspicious.[794]

gTsang smyon then departed for Nepal, and on the way he met many people from sNyi shang[795] who were returning from an Indian trading expedition.[796]

> They had seized a mother and her three daughters who they were going to sell [in Nepal]. The father siddha asked them where they were going. They replied, "We are going to sell these [women]."
>
> Although the great siddha had thoroughly understood the equality of samsara and nirvana, compassion captured him. From the lotuses of his eyes a rosary of tears flowed, without interruption, individual pearls, similar to the continuous flow of a mighty river. His maṇḍala-face became wet.
>
> [He said], "Sell them to me! I will give you whatever price you wish." After having commanded them like this, he gave the traders the price they wanted, without sparing gold itself. He provided the women with a good companion who escorted them to their own country and with clothes and provisions. After having freed them from their suffering and caused them to obtain a state of happiness, he sent them off.[797]

He then went to Nepal, and as on his previous visit, he went to the Bod thang mgon po Mahākāla statue. Many Nepalese who had gathered to make offerings to the protector saw how gTsang smyon and the protector again danced with each other. He then went to the charnel ground of Nāropa situated

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[793] G: 172. Their previous meeting is depicted above pp. 106–108. It should be noted that Kun dga' bzang mo and Kun tu bzang mo, gTsang smyon's female companion, are different persons.

[794] G: 172.

[795] Smith identifies the sNyi shang traders as Ma nang pa traders, and he also mentions that the merchants of Ma nang still travel on trading expeditions reaching as far as Tokyo, Singapore and Hong Kong (Smith 2001: 68, and 286, n. 161).

[796] In the *Heart of the Sun* the place where the following episode occured is said to be Bar sgo (G: 173).

[797] N: 18a–18b: *bud med ma bu bzhi bzung nas 'tshong du 'gro ba dang mjal ba las / pha grub thob kyis khyed rnams gang du 'gro gsungs pas / khong rnams na re / bdag cag rnams ni 'di dag 'tshong ba la dong ngo zhes zhus so / grub thob chen po des ni / 'khor 'das mnyam pa nyid du khong du chud kyang / rnam pa snying rje'i gzhan dbang du gyur pas / spyan gyi pad ma las spyan chab kyi phreng ba / mu tig gi dog pa chu klung chen po'i rgyun lta bu zlog pa med pa g.yos te / zhal ras kyi dkyil 'khor rlan par mdzad nas / 'di rnams kho bo la tshongs shig / khyed rnams ji ltar 'dod pa'i rin kho bos btsal bar bya'o / / zhes sgos te tshong pa'i skye bo rnams la ji tsam 'dod pa'i rin gser nyid du phangs pa med par gnang ste / bud med ma bu rnams rang yul ga la ba der grogs bzang po dang 'grogs te / gos dang yo byad kyi cha rkyen bzang po dang bcas / sdug bsngal dang bral zhing bde ba'i gnas thob par mdzad nas / rdzangs par gyur to /*. A similar passage is found in G: 173. The section from G: is translated in Smith 2001: 68. I have benefited from Smith's excellent translation when translating this part of the *rnam thar*.

north-east of Svayambhū and performed miracles there.[798] People who witnessed these events were amazed and everyone praised him. After a while, everybody from the king to the common people of Nepal had heard about gTsang smyon. Then, in the spring, he whitewashed the Svayambhū Stūpa. Having completed the task he decided to return to Tibet. When he departed from Nepal, the Kho khom[799] king and all of his brothers and sisters together with the rulers of the Ye rang city[800] offered him respect.[801] Lha btsun states that gTsang smyon was forty-five years old when he returned to Tibet, and this would mean that he returned in 1496.[802]

Then, on the way back, he passed through sKyid grong where a famous sandalwood statue of Avalokiteśvara in the form of Khasarpaṇa was housed. This statue is known as Jo bo, just like the famous statue in Lhasa, and it said to have been brought from Nepal by King Song btsan sgam po.[803] A feud was going on between the people to the east and west of Jo bo in sKyi grong. However,...

> ...due to the compassion of the father siddha king [gTsang smyon], the conception of enemy was abandoned, and they merged into one group and remained in delight and happiness. They became diligent and offered respect to the great siddha according to each one's abilities. By the power of their faith, they prostrated, and with an uninterrupted rosary of tears [streaming from their eyes] they sang a rousing song of longing and lamentation. As they went to their own places, they continued to look back, like a vulture attached to meat or a mother camel attached to her baby-camel. The father mahāsiddha and his retinue gradually went through sKyid grong, and after having arrived in the palace of the king, he once again satisfied the king[804] and his entourage with empowerments and instructions.[805]

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798 According to the *Heart of the Sun* the name of the charnel ground is Phag mo dur khrod (Varāhī Charnel Ground), G: 174.

799 This is the Tibetan name, which actually is a transliteration of the Newari, for Bhaktapur (Bhatgaon), an ancient city close to Kathmandu (Wylie 1970: 49; Cüppers 2001: 39, n. 2).

800 This is the Tibetan name, which actually is a transliteration of the Newari, for Patan (Lalitpur) (Wylie 1970: 51). Jäschke: "Name of a city, next to Khobom (Kathmandu), the first in Nepal" (Jäschke 1977: 514).

801 This was gTsang smyon's second visit to the Kathmandu valley in Nepal. The information about this second journey provided here is a summary of dNos grub dpal 'bar's account (N: 18b–19a). rGod tshang ras pa describes it in a similar way, but as usual he provides more details (G: 173–176). rGod tshang ras pa's account has been translated to English, see Lewis and Jamspal 1988: 193–194.

802 L: 102.

803 The statue is also called Vati bzang po. For more information about this statue, see Ehrhard 2004 a.

804 The king in question was probably Khri rnam rgyal lde.

805 N: 19a: *pha grub thob gyi rgyal po'i thugs rjes dgra'i 'du shes dor de / khyu gcig du 'dres shing dga' mgur gnas la / grub thob chen po la yang rang rang gi stobs dang sbyar ba'i bsnyen bkur 'bul pa la brtsen par gyur nas / dad pa'i stobs kyis phyag 'tshal zhing / zlog pa med pa'i mchi ma'i phreng ba dang / sme sngags kyi gdung dbyangs sgrogs par byed te / rang rang gi gnas su bya rgod sha la chags pa'am / rnga mo rnge'u la chags pa bzhin du phyi mig lta zhing dengs par gyur to / pha grub thob chen po 'khor dang bcas pa skyid grong nas*

By the end of the summer, gTsang smyon went to Ti se, and on the way he preached to many people. He visited gLo bo sMon thang's (Mustang) district governor (*lde pa*) and "arriving in Ti se, the king of Snow Mountains, he made a promise to practise there for three years, for the sake of the beings and the teaching. While he stayed there, he established the fortunate ones in liberation and ripening."[806]

dNgos grub dpal 'bar describes the trip to Ti se very briefly. rGod tshang ras pa, however, provides us with more information. According to him a war had broken out between Pu rang and gLo bo smon thang. Pu rang is a district east of the Ma pham g.yu mtsho lake (Mānasarovar) that is situated near Ti se, and Gu ge is situated west of the holy lake. Pu rang was under the suzerainty of Gu ge from the time of the late thirteenth century, but in the middle of the fifteenth century it seems to have been annexed by gLo (Mustang). Later it was returned to the sovereignty of Gu ge.[807] gTsang smyon was invited to mediate but no reconciliation was obtained.[808] The Lord of the Pu rang family, sNyan grags, was eventually completely wiped out and his line of succession broken.[809] Then, the king of gLo, sDe rgyam pa bDe legs rgya mthso,[810] controlled both districts and peace again reigned. At this time gTsang smyon wrote a travel document (*lam yig*) that his disciples used when traveling.[811]

According to Lha btsun, gTsang smyon was forty-seven when he decided to leave Ti se and go to Chu bar. Hence, he probably left the area in 1498.[812] On his way to Chu bar he visited gLo bo smon thang. He arrived there near the end of the construction and decoration of the "Golden Temple" (gSer gyi lha khang).[813] A great ceremony was held in the temple and on a throne at the head of the assembly sat a rNying ma master who was highly esteemed by the gLo bo ruler. The lama was called lama gLo bo pa, and gTsang smyon was invited to sit on a slightly lower mat.[814] Also present were many others

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rims kyis rgyud te / rgyal po pho brang du phyag phebs nas / slar yang rgyal po 'khor bcas rnams dbang dang gdams pas tshim par mdzad de /.

806 N: 19a: *gangs dkar gyi rgyal po te se (ti se) la bstan pa dang / sems can gyi don du lo gsum gyi sgrub pa'i dam bca' mdzad nas skal ldan rnams smin grol la 'god par mdzad cing.*

807 Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 6–7.

808 The story of the battles and gTsang smyon's attempts to mediate is very interesting from a historical point of view and it is depicted in G: 184–188. Vitali has based much of his overview of this historical period upon rGod tshang ras pa's account and also to some extent upon Lha btsun's (Vitali 1996: 530–539).

809 G: 188.

810 The younger brother of A seng whom gTsang smyon had met earlier (Jackson, D. 1984: 124).

811 G: 191. This document will be described in Chapter 9.

812 L: 104.

813 David P. Jackson has translated the section of the *Heart of the Sun* where this visit is recorded (G: 195–197) in his book *A History of Tibetan Painting* (Jackson, D. 1996: 73–74).

814 G: 195. "This 'bla ma gLo bo pa' may have been the Lo Mustang lama 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan (b. 1446) of gLo bo Ge gar, who was the father of mNga' ris paṇ chen Padma dbang rgyal and Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje" (Jackson, D. 1996: 85–86, n. 154).

including the gLo bo king, ministers and many artisans. gTsang smyon requested lama gLo bo if he may ask him, who sat in the place of honor, some questions. Although a bit embarrassed, the lama answered that he could of course do so. gTsang smyon then asked a number of questions about the design of the new temple and the meaning of the different images. He also asked him questions about rNying ma practices. The esteemed lama could not answer and gTsang smyon finally said: "Ah I was just joking around. You don't need to be angry!"[815] Then gTsang smyon asked: "Well then, who was the one who executed the planning and layout (*bkod pa*) for these murals?"[816] It happened to be an old *dge bshes* from dPal 'khor chos sde who was seated at the head of one of the rows. gTsang smyon wanted to debate with the *dge bshes* but he declined. When asked if the *dge bshes* had seen him in dPal 'khor chos sde, the *dge bshes* said that he saw a young monk who was ill-behaved. Finally gTsang smyon was requested to give a lecture and he replied: "Naturally! Minister Tshe bzang, fetch me some beer."[817] Then while drinking a huge amount of beer he gave a perfect exposition of several subjects and backed up his teachings with quotes and examples from different tantras, and Indian and Tibetan treatises. The entire assembly was amazed, not only by gTsang smyon's exceptional learning, but also by the fact that he managed to finish off the beer he was served. The minister Tshe bzang said: "Not only was the exposition like the rising of the sun, but also the beer-offering (*phyag phud*) was not like drinking; it was in fact [more like] milking!" at which all those present broke into laughter.[818]

The Renovation of Svayambhū Stūpa

> I bow down to you who spontaneously accomplished all wishes.
> Turning the wheel of action, you renovated the Go ma sa la gha ta Stūpa[819]—
> a support which is a field of merits of beings and gods.[820]

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[815] Jackson, D. 1996: 73; G 196: *a skyang sku re byas pa yin tshig pa za mi dgos gsung /.*

[816] Jackson, D. 1996: 73; G 196: *de nas yang logs bris 'di dag gi bkod pa byed mkhan su yin gsung tshe /.*

[817] Jackson, D. 1996: 74; G 197: *los byed dpon po tshe bzangs (bzang) chang cig long gcig gsung /.* "The minister Tshe dbang bzang po was a very important figure in gLo bo at this time. A few years later in his mid-fifties he would father Kun dga' grol mchog (1507–1566/67), a noble monk who went on to become an illustrious lama in the dBus and gTsang provinces in central Tibet, and to serve as the head of the great Jo nang monastery" (Jackson, D. 1996: 86, n. 155).

[818] Jackson, D. 1996: 74; G: 197: *bshad pa de yang nyi ma shar ba 'dras byung ste / phyag phud de yang gzhes pa mi 'dra 'jo ba rang du 'dug zer bas.*

[819] Svayambhū Stūpa.

[820] N: 2a. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 2.

In Chu bar gTsang smyon guided his many disciples in their practice and also composed more texts. According to Lha btsun he was fifty years old (1501) when he started to receive repeated invitations from the Nepalese king Ratnamalla,[821] his minister and many others.[822] They all wanted gTsang smyon to repair the Svayambhū Stūpa in the Kathmandhu valley which had fallen into decay.[823] gTsang smyon finally agreed to accept this very difficult undertaking, but his disciples feared that he would not be able to accomplish the arduous task. They expressed their worries and concerns for his life and limbs if he attempted to do it. gTsang smyon comforted them with the following words:

> This advice of yours shows that you haven't abandoned your affection towards me, but there is no need to have this kind of worry. The activity of mine, the Madman of gTsang, will be accomplished by the ḍākinīs, Dharma Protectors and the Eight Kinds of Oath Bound Ones (*dam can sde brgyad*). It is not necessary for me to collect the offerings; there will spontaneously be enough materials for the reparation.[824]

gTsang smyon then started to gather the necessary materials and funding for the renovation. He used his large network of patrons and disciples to accomplish the task.

Having collected the necessary things, gTsang smyon, a large group of disciples, and other voluntary participants in the renovation project, went to Nepal. On the way, he met the Seventh Karmapa, Chos grags rgya mtsho (1451–1502), one of the most important and influential Buddhist masters of the time. The Karmapa was on his way to meet the main leader of Tibet, gZhis kha Rin spungs (Don yod rdo rje) and he had heard much about gTsang smyon. The Karmapa was very impressed by his many works and especially by the planned restoration of the Svayambhū Stūpa.[825] He gave gTsang smyon a letter of praise that is included in the *Heart of the Sun*. Ilze Maruta Stearns [Kalnins] has translated this letter in her master's thesis *The Life of gTsang smyon Heruka: A Study in Divine Madness*:

> I, of the universally famous name of Karma pa, have this to say: I have gradually been hearing the tales of the Holy Master Yogi, gTsang smyon's deeds to spread the bKa' brgyud teachings, such as carving the blocks for glorious

[821] The Nepalese king Ratnamalla, son of Yakṣamalla, became a king during the final Malla-period when the Nepalese kingdom broke up into three kingdoms. Ratnamalla ruled in the Kathmandu-kingdom 1484–1520 (Slusser 1982: 61–62).
[822] L: 111.
[823] N: 19b.
[824] N: 20a: *khyed rnams kyi gros de nga la sha tsha ma dor ba yin na'ang / nge tsam rang gi sems las mi dgos te / nga gtsang pa smyon pa'i 'phrin las 'di mkha' 'gro chos skyong dang / dam can sde brgyad rnams kyis sgrub cing / nga rang 'bul bsdud la 'gro me dgos shing zhig gsol kyi dngos po ldang ba cig ngas rgyugs pī zhor la yod gsung ste.*
[825] G: 214.

> bZhad pa rdo rje's *Life* and *Songs* and establishing hermitages in the mountains of the Three Sacred Places. I too am happy, and I delight in it! Furthermore, the restoration of Swayambhūnāth in Nepal and the hermitages in 'Brin and Chu bar, and the rest of the load you bear for the teaching has become heavier. I too will do whatever is of help, so do not give up! May good fortune burn bright, and may you beautify this world![826]

When the party arrived in Nepal, they were received with much pomp and glory. The king and his ministers and a large number of people met them and a huge welcoming ceremony was performed.[827]

gTsang smyon then carried out an offering feast and the work began. After having performed the necessary rituals and ceremonies, the rotten wood of the dharma wheels (*chos skor*)[828] and the parasol (*gdug*, *chattra*) were dismantled. At that point many of the Tibetans that were there to help with the restoration became afraid that an epidemic would come. They also feared that they might die from the heat if they stayed. Even some of gTsang smyon's own disciples started to lose their courage. Many people therefore returned to Tibet again and only the most faithful disciples of gTsang smyon remained.[829] The loss of the Tibetan volunteers did not discourage gTsang smyon, and he found many other people who wanted to participate in the work.[830]

Towards the end of the project several obstacles arose. A swarm of bees attacked the workers and heavy rains made the work difficult. gTsang smyon managed to dispel the obstacles and the work continued. When they had renovated the whole stūpa and also the surrounding chapels and pathways, and only had to whitewash the stūpa and perform a consecration ceremony, a wind arose and swept away all dirt and unwanted materials. The area around the stūpa became clean and beautiful as if an expert cleaner had made everything very clean. On the actual day of the consecration, offerings from gods and non-humans filled the area. Everyone could hear heavenly music and beautiful clouds of various colors appeared in the clear sky.[831]

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[826] Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 77; G: 214: *nga ming yongs su grags pa skar (kar) ma pa'i gtam / rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug dam pa gtsang smyon pas / dpal ldan gzhad (bzhad) pa rdo rje'i rnam thar mgur 'bum spar du gshengs (bzhengs) shing / gnas gsum gyi ri la sgrub sde 'dzugs pa sogs bka' rgyud (brgyud) kyi bstan pa dar rgyas su bgyis pa'i gtam rim par thos pas / nged kyang sems spro zhing rjes su yid rangs (yi rang) / slar yang bal yul 'phags pa shing kun gyi zhig bsos dang / brin ('brin) chu bar du bsgrub (sgrub) sde sogs bstan pa'i khur che bar yod 'dug pa / nged rang gis kyang grogs su ci 'gyur byed pas / 'dir mi sleb pa mdzod / bkra shis dpal 'bar 'dzam gling rgyan du shog / ces pa gnang /.*

[827] N: 20a–20b.

[828] Rings (*cakravāli*) in various sizes that are stacked on one another and thus form the cylinder formed upper part of the stūpa (*caitya*), upon which the parasol is attached.

[829] N: 20b.

[830] N: 20b–21a.

[831] N: 21b.

After four and a half months in Nepal, on the fifteenth day of the twelfth month, a Wood-Mouse year (1504),[832] gTsang smyon had accomplished the renovation of the stūpa. The renovation work itself took only two months and thirteen days.[833] Since not even one of the participants in the project died or got sick, even those who had previously lacked devotion developed faith in gTsang smyon and said: "If [gTsang smyon] is not a siddha, then who is?"[834]

Back in Tibet, many of gTsang smyon's disciples went into retreats, some for the rest of their lives. La phyi, Tsāri, the Six Forts (*rdzong drug*), empty valleys and solitary hermitages thus became filled with his yogin disciples. Before they left, gTsang smyon gave them all the instructions and material things they needed. gTsang smyon brought along the remaining disciples as attendants and went to Chu bar. By now he had become known as an "indisputable emanation, unrivalled on this earth."[835]

The Last Tour

> I bow down to you who acquired an indestructible adamantine body.
> Still, in order to counteract adherence to permanence,
> at age fifty-six, accompanied by particularly wondrous signs and miracles you went to the pure land of the ḍākinīs.[836]

During the next years gTsang smyon spent the winters in Chu bar and the summers in the forest of 'O 'byung.[837] While he was residing there, it became known that Don yod rdo rje, the great Rin spungs pa king, who was one of the most powerful leaders of Tibet at the time, was amassing an army of eighty thousand soldiers at Grwa gar gling kha. He intended to use this army to strike at several locations in Southern Lha stod. gTsang smyon immediately sent a letter to his old patron, requesting him to disperse his armies, saying that to begin this kind of trouble in the middle of dBus-gTsang would be like starting a fire, which burns up everything. Don yod rdo rje, deferred to gTsang smyon's wishes and the catastrophe was averted.[838]

During his three-year stay in Chu bar gTsang smyon composed a *rnam thar* of Marpa[839] and some more texts for the Aural Transmission compila-

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[832] G: 225.
[833] G: 220. The renovation took three months according to dNgos grub dpal 'bar and Lha btsun (N: 23a; L: 122).
[834] N: 23a: *grub thob min na su yin zer*
[835] N: 23a: *sa stengs (steng) 'dir 'gran zla med pa'i sprul sku.*
[836] N: 2a. For the Tibetan text, see Appendix 2.
[837] G: 235.
[838] G: 234; Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 39–40.
[839] G: 235. For more information about this work, see Chapter 9.

tion that he had been working on since his mid-twenties.[840] gTsang smyon then exchanged his possessions for gold and copper, which he sent to guild the four pillars that supported the parasol of the Svayambhū Stūpa.[841]

gTsang smyon then planned to make a golden print of his Aural Transmission collection and place a copy of it in each one of his three favorite holy places, Ti se, La phyi and Tsāri. He sent for master calligraphers, and bDag chen chos rje and his family offered a great deal of paper. Unfortunately, a strong wind came and scattered the paper. gTsang smyon had to postpone his plans, and he made a few ordinary copies of his compilation instead.[842] gTsang smyon then told his disciples to proofread his compilation and come to him to clear up any doubts or uncertainties that they might have. Otherwise, they would have much regret when he was gone, he said.[843]

Having completed the Aural Transmission compilation, gTsang smyon's largest literary effort, and one of his main missions in life, gTsang smyon said:

> I have dedicated myself fully to the *sNyan brgyud* and the Reverend Lord Mi la's *Life*. Now that the texts of the *sNyan brgyud* are finished, my life is complete. I, a mendicant yogi, have not done just a little work for the Buddha's teaching. Other than not establishing a fund as I had previously intended, for completing a copy in gold of this *sNyan brgyud*, and for whitewashing Swayambhūnāth, I have no regrets even if I were to die. Nor do I know if I will stay a long time.[844]

Then, at age fifty-four (1505), gTsang smyon and a group of disciples departed for what was to be his last tour.[845] When they left Chu bar several bad signs appeared and gTsang smyon's health deteriorated. The glacier of the holy Tshe ring ma mountain fell down and a stream of holy water in sMan lung dried up.[846] Despite, or perhaps because of, the many bad omens, which indicated his approaching death, he traveled extensively and gave teachings and empowerments to a large number of people. In sTod, his patrons, the leader of Southern La stod, Kun dga' rnam rgyal,[847] and the leader of North-

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840 N: 23b. For more information about these works, see Chapter 9

841 G: 235.

842 G: 245. This incident is referred to in Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 40 and Sernesi, forthcoming.

843 G: 245. Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 40.

844 Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 41; G: 246: *nga snyan rgyud (brgyud) dang / rje btsun mi la'i rnam thar 'di'i ched du thod pa skal (rgal?) ba yin / da snyan rgyud (brgyud) kyi yig cha nams tshar na ba' [nga'i] cha tshang (tshe tshad) kyang rdzogs / kho bo gya bral (bya bral?) bas sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa la bya ba yang mi chung tsam byas yod / snyan rgyud [brgyud] 'di gser ma cig ma grub pa dang shing kun la sku dkar gyis (gyi) bdag rkyen gcig 'dzugs bsam pa sngar ma grub / 'di tsam cig ma rtogs shi rung yang 'gyod pa med nga rgyun rings (ring) rang e sdod yang mi shes gsung ngo /*. A similar passage is found in N: 23b.

845 L: 124.

846 N: 23b.

847 Perhaps this is bDag chen Kun dga' rnam par rgyal ba rab tu brtan pa'i rdo rje dpal bzang po who is mentioned in Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho's *Shel dkar chos 'byung* 1996: 7b.

ern La stod, Kun dga' legs pa, went to meet him. The leaders and their ministers offered gTsang smyon perfect service and veneration.[848]

gTsang smyon then received an invitation from the Rin spungs king, Don yod rdo rje, and went to meet the great leader. Wherever gTsang smyon and his disciples traveled, people assembled to get a glimpse of him and show their veneration. According to dNgos grub dpal 'bar, so many people gathered that it was almost impossible to come near or prostrate to gTsang smyon.[849]

gTsang smyon met Don yod rdo rje at Shangs rnam rgyal gling. Don yod rdo rje's many honorific titles show his exalted status, dNgos grub dpal 'bar calls him: "the emperor (*sa skyong*), the dharma king (*chos kyi rgyal po*) and the Lord of mankind (*mi dbang*)."[850]

gTsang smyon, Don yod rdo rje and their many followers then went to bSam grub rtse (gZhis ka rtse)[851] where gTsang smyon taught Buddhism to a large number of people.[852] gTsang smyon and his followers then went to Nor bu khyung rtse, a town situated about 42 km southeast of bSam grub rtse, where they spent the summer. There he continued to "turn the profound and extensive wheel of dharma for the fortunate persons and established them on the path of ripening and liberation."[853]

Then, gTsang smyon and his many followers went towards Lhasa. On the way a lama named Nam mkha' dbang po asked gTsang smyon: "What lineage do you follow? Which lama has been kindest towards you? What experiences and understandings do you have?"

gTsang smyon answered, "My lineage is the renowned Dwags po bKa' brgyud, [my] lama is Sha ra rab 'byams pa, and I have no experience or realization at all."[854]

Sha ra ba, in a similar manner, said that he had faith in the Dwags po bKa' brgyud when the same question was asked to him.[855] It is noteworthy that gTsang smyon and Sha ra ba considered themselves to be Dwags po bKa' brgyud pa*s* and not Ras chung bKa' brgyud pa*s*. The latter might be

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[848] L: 124, N: 24a.

[849] N: 24a.

[850] N: 24a.

[851] bSam grub rtse is the old name of gZhis ka rtse, an estate in gTsang which developed as a royal residence after the usurpation of power by the Rin spungs pa princes. Today it is a well-known town and county, mainly known as it is pronounced: Zhigatse (Gyurme Dorje 2004: 277).

[852] N: 24a.

[853] N: 24b: *skal ldan gyi gdul bya rnams la / zab rgyas kyi chos 'khor rgya che bar skor nas / smin pa dang grol ba'i lam la bkod cing /*. According to dNgos grub dpal 'bar, gTsang smyon then went to mKhar kha to perform the cremation ceremonies for his mother (N: 24b). rGod tshang ras pa also describes this visit and mentions that he visited mKhar kha in the autumn (G: 253). But, as seen above, Lha btsun places this visit earlier.

[854] L: 125: *ngas rgyud pa dags po (dwags po) bka' rgyud (brgyud) du grags pa de yin / bla ma sha ra rab 'byams pa yin / nga rang la go myong rtogs pa ci yang med byas bas.*

[855] Byams pa phun tshogs 1976: 471.

expected, since they were lineage holders of many traditions and practices that had been passed on through Ras chung and not Dwags po (sGam po pa). It should, however, be kept in mind that both of them also practised many teachings that came from sGam po pa's lineage.

When he arrived in Lhasa, gTsang smyon went to the precious and holy Jo bo statue,[856] where he offered butter lamps and made "perfectly pure aspirational prayers for the spread of the teachings and the happiness of the beings."[857]

gTsang smyon also met his powerful patron Don yod rdo rje again and managed to use his influence to avert a war in mNga' ris rdzong dkar.[858] rGod tshang ras pa then describes an interesting incident that is not mentioned by the other disciples. Just like the historical Buddha and Milarepa, gTsang smyon deliberately ate some bad food that eventually killed him.[859]

Nirvana

gTsang smyon then spent the winter at Zal mo brag where, despite his bad health, he gave teachings and empowerments to five hundred people.[860] dNgos grub dpal 'bar describes how his health deteriorated while he "turned the immense Dharma Wheel [and taught] whatever dharma was wanted."[861] gTsang smyon's disciples begged him to stop his teachings and take care of his health. gTsang smyon refused to listen to them and said: "'If I die for the sake of the teachings and the beings, that is alright. I cannot give up the dharma.' Without interruption, he gave the remaining teaching and he perfectly gave every individual [instructions] and established [those who listened] on the path of ripening and liberation."[862] Having satisfied everyone with the extensive teaching, he continued to travel. His path went through Yar glung and, despite his bad health, he visited one of his heart-sons (Chos mchog dpal bzang) who was on his deathbed.[863]

Then, gTsang smyon received an invitation from the *gong ma* of sNe'u gdong, bKra shis grags pa rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po (bKra shis grags pa).[864] bKra shis grags pa was an important leader who was married to Legs

856 A very famous statute of the Buddha in the Jo khang temple in Lhasa, which was brought to Tibet by the queen of the "dharma king" Srong btsan sgam po.
857 N: 24b.
858 G: 254.
859 Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 42; G: 254.
860 N: 24b; G: 256.
861 N: 24b: *gang la gang 'dod kyi chos kyi 'khor lo rgya chen po skor zhing /.*
862 N: 24b: *nga bstan pa dang sems can gyi don du shi na yang shi / chos blos btong ba mi yong gsung zhing / gsung chos kyi 'phro rnams re la ma chag par gnang ste / kha kha so so'i khrid rnams yongs su rdzogs par gnang nas smin cing grol ba'i lam la bkod par mdzad do /.*
863 N: 24b–25a.
864 G: 258.

mtsho rgyal mo, the daughter of Don yod rdo rje.[865] He was the successor of the Phag mo gru rulers whose title (*gong ma*) was a remnant of their former glory. However, gTsang smyon was so sick at this point that he had to decline the invitation. He could not even walk, so his disciples carried him on a palanquin. Prayers and rituals were performed day and night, but to no avail. gTsang smyon told his disciples that "Since the end of my life has arrived healing ceremonies (*rim 'gros*) will not help. Nevertheless, in order to complete your accumulations [of merit] exert yourself in it!"[866] They did "as [gTsang smyon] had said, but it was like the example of an elephant sinking in mud, and was of no use."[867]

It became increasingly obvious that gTsang smyon was about to depart to the celestial regions, and instead of continuing toward gTsang smyon's favorite place, Tsāri, he had to be taken to a more nearby place. Different options were considered and when gTsang smyon heard the name Ras chung phug being suggested he was delighted and said: "I'll go there now. The Father shall die in the house of the Son."[868]

Ras chung phug was a site associated with Milarepa's notorious disciple Ras chung pa, and the fact that gTsang smyon chose to die at that place shows that he had a particular link with Ras chung pa and his transmission lineage, and also that he regarded himself as Milarepa, the spiritual father of Ras chung pa.[869]

When gTsang smyon had arrived in Ras chung phug beautiful rainbow-hued clouds arose from Tsāri every morning and then returned to Tsāri again each evening for nine days in a row.[870] gTsang smyon's disciples also had many dreams that foretold gTsang smyon's death. During his stay gTsang smyon kept asking his disciples about the date, and on the 13th day of the month he started to give instructions and also told his secret life story (*gsang ba'i rnam thar*).[871]

Then, the heart-sons who were with gTsang smyon said, "If it is certain that you will go to another pure land, please grant a heart-command with precepts concerning what to adopt and what to abandon and how we should do it."[872] The Lord said,[873]

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865 G: 258

866 N: 25a: *kho bo'i tshe'i 'du byed kyi dus la bab 'dug pas / rim 'gros mi phan kyang / khyed rang rnams tshogs rdzogs pas 'bad pa thon.../.*

867 N: 25a: *gsung ba ltar bsgrubs kyang / glang po che 'dam du bying ba'i dpe ru song ste / phan pa'i skabs ma byung zhing /.*

868 Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 80; G: 270; *da der 'gro bu khyim du pha 'chi ba yin /.*

869 More information on Ras chung phug will be given in Chapter 9.

870 N: 25b.

871 N: 25b–26b. The secret life story was presented above (p 118.).

872 N: 26b: *zhing khams gzhan du 'byon par nges na / bdag rjes 'jug rnams kyi spang blang byed lugs kyi bka' lung thugs tsha la sbyar ba'i mka' zhal cig gnang 'tshal /.*

873 The parts of the text after the secret *rnam thar* to the instructions are not included in G.

"To have many plans [when] the arrow [is in] front,
now in the final resting place, is not necessary.

If you listen, devote your entire life to practice,[874]
and then the intention of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas
will also be perfected.

You monk-disciples, together with the patrons,
have the good karma and fortune to meet Milarepa himself
[in this] degenerate time.

Continue to study the life story of Mila
and equalize your life and practice!
Then you will hear the real speech (of Mila)
and (Mila) will look after you.

[This] was established from the state of dharmatā.

E waṃ."[875]

Then on the 15th day (full moon) of the month the physician who checked gTsang smyon's pulse found that the pulse had disappeared and started to cry. gTsang smyon comforted him with the following words:"There is no reason to be anxious. I have known that death existed and devoted my life to practising in the three holy places. But this is your way of acting, and while ordinary persons become afraid, the yogin ['s attitude towards] death is different."[876]

Then, gTsang smyon told his disciples to offer *gtor mas*. That day the sky was clear and rainbow-hued clouds, unlike the previous ones, beautifully shaped and filled with various colors appeared. Especially in front of the bedroom, rainbows in five different colors, like a folded tent, surrounded the sun. In the middle of the five colored rainbows was the form of a maṇḍala filled with offering goddesses and various hand symbols. Various kinds of things were perceived and many wonderful and auspicious signs arose. Because all the people saw this, and since the many wonderful signs as well as

[874] In the *Heart of the Sun* it is also stated that one should practise in the three holy places of the [three] snow mountains (*gnas gsum gyi gangs ri la*), (G: 273).

[875] N: 26b: *da mal gyi tha mar mda' kha'i bkod pa mang po byas nas dgos pa med / kha la nyan na thams cad tshe dang sgrub pa snyoms / der ma tshad sangs rgyas byang chub sems dpa'i tham cad kyi dgongs pa rdzogs pa yin / grwa pa bu slob yon bdag dang bcas pa rnams / snyigs dus mi la ras pa dang dngos su 'jal ba yin pas / las dang skal pa bzang / da dung mi la'i rnam thar la ltos la / tshe dang sgrub pa snyoms / dngos su gsung thos par 'gyur zhing rjes su 'dzin no / chos nyid ngang nas bkod pa e baṃ*. Some of these lines are translated in Quintman 2006: 260. The final instructions are also given in G: 273 and a translation of the last part of the instructions as rendered in G is found in Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 81.

[876] N: 26b: *'tsher rgyu mi 'dug / ngas 'chi ba yod par shes nas gnas gsum gyi ri la tshe dang sgrub pa mnyams pa yin 'on kyang khyod rang gi byed lugs yin cing / so so skye bo tha mal pa rnams la 'jigs skrag bskyed pa yin pas / rnal 'byor pa 'chi ba dang mi 'dra gsung ngo /.*

the serious illness of the Lord appeared at the same time, they said to each other that even though we prayed our wishing prayers did not work. They realized that the time had now come for their beloved guru to go to a pure land. Everyone became afraid, sad and very perplexed.[877]

Then gTsang smyon told his disciples to dress him in new clothes and prepare offerings and *gtor ma*s.

> There was a small veranda to stay on during the days [outside of his meditation cave] and there they made a resting place. Besides [gTsang smyon] the offerings and *gtor ma*s were arranged and extensive dedication-rituals were performed. These were completed in a Female Fire-Rabbit year (1507)[878] called Rab byung,[879] the month was the fifth Hor month and the date the fifteenth. Around the middle of the evening, the Lord said, "Make my sitting position comfortable!" and [gTsang smyon's] body was straightened up. [Then,] in order to avert the clinging to permanence of those who cling to permanence, and [for the sake] of the holy teaching, and [to] generate astonishment in scholars (*dge ba'i bshes*), he displayed the way of melting the appearance of the form body into the sphere of dharmakāya. The sun of the teachings set in this snowy region in the north (Tibet), a part of the undividable world, and it became dusk.[880]

dNgos grub dpal 'bar and rGod tshang ras pa then continue to describe the many apparitions and wonders that appeared during and after gTsang smyon's death, not least during his cremation ceremony.[881]

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[877] This is a summary of the *Lion of Faith* (N: 27a).

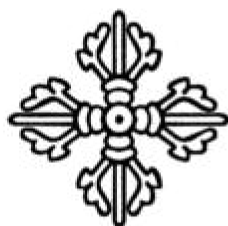
[878] In the *Heart of the Sun* and in Thu'u bkwan's short *rnam thar* the year given is Female Water-Hare (*chu mo yos*) (1543) (G: 274; T: 45). In both *rnam thars* gTsang smyon is said to have been fifty-six years old when he died, and this corresponds with the year given above in the *Lion of Faith* and the *Life Story which Causes the Body-Hairs of the Faithful to Flutter* (N: 27a; L: 126).

[879] *Rab byung* is the name of the first year of the sixty-year cycle; it was the ninth (*rab byung dgu pa*).

[880] N: 27a–27b: *nyin mo bzhugs sa'i g.yabs chung cig yod pa der bzims mal bcas te / sku 'khris su mchod gtor rnams bshams tshar ba dang / rgyas par bsngo ba gnang nas tshar ba dang / rab byung zhes bya ba / me mo yos kyi lo / hor zla lnga pa'i tshes bcwa lnga'i nyi ma dgongs phyed tsam la / rje'i zhal nas / nga'i sdod lugs 'di bde mo zhig chos gsung / sku drang por srang pas / gdul bya rtag 'dzin can rnam skyi rtag 'dzin zlog pa dang / dam pa'i chos dang / dge ba'i bshes la rnyed dka' ba'i 'du shes bskyed pa'i phyir du / gzugs sku'i snang ba chos sku'i dbyings su thim pa'i tshul bstan te / mi 'byed 'jig rten gyi zhing gi nang nas / byang phyogs gangs can gyi ljongs 'di'i / bstan pa'i nyi ma nub / sa'i phyogs rnams mog mog por byas /.*

[881] Schaeffer has made an excellent summary of rGod tshang ras pa's account of his death and what happened afterwards (Schaeffer 2007: 218–221). Since rGod tshang ras pa describes it in a similar way as dNgos grub dpal 'bar I will not repeat it here. As mentioned earlier, the last part of gTsang smyon's life is described very briefly in the *Life Story which Causes the Body-Hairs of the Faithful to Flutter* and Lha btsun directs those who want to know more about it to other accounts, probably rGod tshang ras pa's and dNgos grub dpal 'bar's (L: 126).

Part Three: Contexts



Chapter 8: Tantric Buddhism

As has been seen above, gTsang smyon vigorously practised Tantric Buddhism until he reached "accomplishment" (*siddhi*) and became an "accomplished one" (*siddha*). To comprehend what gTsang smyon did, and why, it is necessary to be familiar with some of the Buddhist tantric practices that he carried out and the principles behind them.

In the *Heart of the Sun* it is mentioned that, while gTsang smyon was staying in sMan khab, a certain mDzad kram pa remarked that:

> "Many true yogins of India had the hand symbols, the heruka implements, and the long hair and so forth, of the Secret Mantra vehicle, but in Tibet, besides a few with long and matted hair, no one before the Lord [gTsang smyon] had the completely perfect heruka implements. At present there are many who dress like this [with heruka outfit] outwardly, but are without qualities or realization. As for us disciples, if we have no permission, we are not allowed to have the manner and garments of a heruka. Concerning this, what inner experience, realization and qualities are needed for someone to be allowed to use the heruka garments?"[882]

This is an interesting question since it implies that mDzad khram pa considered gTsang smyon to be the first person in Tibet who acted and dressed like the Indian siddhas used to do, namely with the full heruka garments (*heru ka'i chas*): six bone ornaments: (1) crown ornament (*dbu rgyan*), (2) ear rings (*rna rgyan*), (3) necklace (*mgul rgyan*), (4) bracelets (*lag gdub*), (5) Brahmin cord (*mchod phyir thogs*) and (6) anklets (*rkang gdub*), and also other things such as a tiger-skin skirt (*stag sham*). According to the *Heart of the Sun*, gTsang smyon was thus historically important since he was the first Tibetan heruka.

In this chapter, sMan khab's question will be addressed in a somewhat detailed fashion. What do Indian and Tibetan tantric Buddhist texts and masters actually say about these matters? What is meant by a heruka? Who is supposed to dress and act like a heruka? How does such a practitioner actu-

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[882] G: 230: *gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i ral pa sogs he ru ka'i cha lugs dang phyag mtshan / dngos su rnal 'byor pas mdzad pa rgya gar du mang du byung 'dug na'ang / bod su ral pa dang lcang lo gzhag pa re re tsam las he ru ka'i chas yongs rdzogs mdzad pa / rje nyid ma phebs gong du ma byung par 'dug la / da nang na yon tan dang nyams rtogs med pa rnams kyis kyang / phyi yi cha lugs 'di bzhin byed pa mang du 'dug / rang re'i bu slob rnams la bka' snang med na he ru ka'i chas lugs byas mi chog pa 'dug pa / 'di la nang du nyams rtogs dang yon tan ji tsam nas he ru ka'i chas byas pas chog pa yin lags zhu tshe /.*

ally act and dress? When, or more precisely, at what point in one's tantric practice, is one allowed to perform these practices?

At the end of the chapter we will have a look at gTsang smyon's own answer to sMan khab's question, but first both the Indian and Tibetan explanations of these practices will be presented.

Precursors and Parallels to Tantric Buddhism

Many of the unusual and seemingly crazy practices that are described in the hagiographies of gTsang smyon originate in India. In the block-print pictures and statues that have been preserved, gTsang smyon looks similar to an Indian Buddhist siddha.[883] Like these siddhas, he resembles a Śaiva yogin, especially the now extinct Kāpālika yogins who are described in a somewhat similar fashion.[884]

gTsang smyon is portrayed with long hair tied up in a topknot, and his ears are decorated with large round earrings. He is usually depicted with a mustache and a small beard. His eyes are open and he is looking straight forward. In his right hand he holds a vajra, and in his left hand a skull-cup. His tantric staff is usually standing upright behind him, and he is often depicted with a meditation belt. His body is adorned with various kinds of bone ornaments, and he is naked, or dressed only in a small loin-cloth. Sometimes he sits in vajra-posture, but more often his right leg is slightly extended. His outer appearance is thus very different from that of a Buddhist monk, and as we have seen, so was his behavior.

Above, we saw many examples of how gTsang smyon practised asceticism, going around naked, living in caves and charnel grounds and wandering around with no fixed abode. These types of ascetic practices had existed in India long before Buddhism, and they also constitute an important ele-

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883 Block-print pictures of gTsang smyon are found in many of the works related to the so-called "gTsang smyon school." See, for example, G: 3, L: 2; N: 1b; Bya bral pa Tshul khrims dpal ldan 1544: 1a; Byams pa phun tshogs 1976: 452; *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka*: 1b; *Lha btsun gyi rnam mgur* 1976: 275; Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal 1543: 1a; Lha btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, *rGyud kyi dgongs pa gtsor ston pa phyag rgya chen po yig ge bzhi pa'i 'brel bshad gnyug ma'i gter mdzod ces bya ba* 1561: 1b; *rNal 'byor dbang phyug lha btsun chos kyi rgyal po'i rnam thar gyi smad cha*: 2a; Sangs rgyas dar po dpal bzang 1540: 116a. Two partly colored wood-block pictures of gTsang smyon are reproduced in Clemente 2007: 128, plates 4 and 5. Two beautiful statues are reproduced in Dinwiddie 2003: 154–157. Pictures of both these statues are also included in *Monastaries y lamas del Tibet: Exposición Orgnizada por la Fundación "La Caixa" 2000*: 179–180 and in this dissertation as well (see cover picture and Figure 1, p. 257). Yet another beautiful statue from the 16th century is reproduced in Linrothe 2006: 373. The same statue is also found in Stearns 2007: 73. gTsang smyon is also sometimes depicted in the background of thankas. See for example, Essen, Gerd Wolfgang and Thingo, Tsering Tashi 1989: 132, picture no. II-284.

884 See, for example, Lorenzen 1991: 2. Even nowadays some Indian Śaiva yogins such as the *Aghorīs* look and behave in ways that resemble gTsang smyon, at least in some respects. See, for example, Parry 1994: 251–257; Bedi 1991: 97–107.

ment of Buddhism. What appears to be extreme or even crazy conduct is thus better understood as a form of ascetic discipline, a discipline with deep roots in Indian traditions.[885]

A hymn in the *Ṛg Veda* describes a long haired ascetic (Keśin) as being "Crazy with asceticism."[886] The hymn also associates this ascetic with the god Rudra, which indicates that the Keśin was on the margin of Vedic society. It should further be noted that the god Rudra was eventually transformed into, and identified as, the god Śiva. The Indian Buddhist siddhas resembled the Śaiva yogins, and both groups of practitioners followed a path with similar methods and practices.[887] According to Ronald Davidson, the three Śaiva sects that most influenced the Buddhist siddha practice were the Kāpālika, Kaula and Pāśupata denominations.[888]

One of the most notable features of the Pāśupata practice is an ascetic observance (*vrata*) which consists of four successive stages of discipline.[889] During the second, so-called "un-marked" (*avyakta*) stage, the Pāśupata yogin was supposed to act like a madman. He was to leave the temple and abandon the identifying marks of his sect. Without anyone knowing his true identity (as a Pāśupata yogin), he was to go to places where people could see him and deliberately and publicly act in ways that resembled a mad person's behavior.[890]

The Kāpālikas, so called because they carried a *kapāla* (a human skull), lived in the cremation grounds where they practised a form of asceticism that was even more outrageous and antinomian than that of the Pāśupatas. The Kāpālikas worshiped the ferocious forms of Śiva, such as Bhairava and his consort Bhairavī, whom they emulated in a quite literal way, which made them rather controversial and also feared. The Kāpālikas practised an observance (*vrata*) called *kāpālavrata* (skull-observance) or *mahāvrata* (great observance)[891] and they had a number of visible attributes that made them

[885] Mad behavior is also common in Indian devotionalism (*bhakti*). See, for example, Kinsley 1974; McDaniel 1989; Yocum 1983. In my opinion, *bhakti*-madness is of another type than the madness of the Tibetan mad yogins, and it will therefore not be examined here.
[886] Ṛg Veda 10.136,3a: *unmaditā mauneyena*. Translated in O'Flaherty 1981: 137–138. For a study of the Keśin hymn, see Deeg 1993: 97–117.
[887] Sanderson has written much about the similarities between Tantric Buddhism and Śaivism. See, for example, Sanderson 1990; Sanderson 1994; Sanderson 2001.
[888] Davidson 2002: 177.
[889] This *vrata* is sometimes called *pāśupatavrata*. There are different ways of enumerating the stages. According to some they followed three stages (for example, Flood 1996: 156–157), and according to others, five stages (for example, Davidson 2002: 183). The differences concern the last stages that either could be counted as one, two or three. Since it is the first two stages that concern us here these different ways of counting are irrelevant.
[890] See, for example, Lorenzen 1991: 185. A translation of the section of *Pāśupatasūtra* that deals with the second stage with an abbreviated translation of Kauṇḍiya's commentary is found in Ingalls 1962: 285–291.
[891] For the history of this observance, see, for example, Deeg 1993: 130–136; Lorenzen 1972: 74, 76; Sanderson 1990: 134. Lewis 1989: 109.

famous/infamous.[892] The most peculiar signs of the Kāpālikas were the skull (*kapāla*) and the skull-topped staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) which they carried around. The importance of the skull is indicated by their name, but it is important to be aware of the fact that both the skull and the staff were equally important to the Lākulīśa Pāśupatas and to many of the Buddhist siddhas; they too were skull bearers—Kāpālikas—but of a different kind. For the Śaiva Kāpālikas it was not enough to invoke and worship Śiva. They instead wanted to become Śiva and thus emulated the god in their own behavior and outlook. Gavin Flood points out that "the goal of the Kāpālika was power (*siddhi*) which he thought he could achieve through breaking social taboos."[893]

Alexis Sanderson notes that the Kāpālika culture of the cremation ground also permeates the Kaula or Kula tradition.[894] This tradition contained many transgressive practices and those who followed the tradition were known to use impurities as a means to gain magical power.[895] The *Kulārṇava Tantra*, for example, encourages the participants in a certain ritual to behave like mad persons, and "this behavior carried into the public domain is intended to indicate the supremacy of the *kula* path."[896] The female goddesses/spirits around which their cult was centered are known as yoginīs. The term Kaula/Kula refers to families of yoginīs who are retinues of tantric deities and their consorts.[897] Ḍākinī is a general term that could be used as an equivalent of both yoginī and devī, and like these terms it could refer to both humans and non-humans (i.e. goddesses). Adelheid Herrmann-Pfandt states that the word ḍākinī is explained in tantric Buddhist texts as "female skygoer" (*ākāśagāminī*).[898] This explains why the Tibetans translated the term as "*mkha' 'gro*" or "*mkha' 'gro ma*", which means "skygoer" and "female skygoer", respectively. The term ḍākinī was used by both Hindus and Buddhists, and early examples of the use of the term are found in texts dating back to the 3rd to 5th century.[899] It should be observed that ḍākinī is a term of great importance for gTsang smyon; one of the most central transmission lineages that he practised and disseminated was sometimes called the Aural Transmission of the Ḍākinīs (*mKa' 'gro snyan brgyud*)—a lineage originating in oral teachings of a non-human ḍākinī.

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892 Rāmanuja lists six primary signs of kāpālika worship: a necklace, a neck ornament, large earrings, a jewel in their hair, ashes and a sacred thread (Rāmanuja cited in Lorenzen 1972: 2).
893 Flood 1996: 165.
894 Sanderson 1990: 138–139.
895 Flood 1996: 190.
896 Braveman 2003: 222.
897 Flood 1996: 166.
898 Herrmann-Pfandt 1992 a: 46. See also Herrmann-Pfandt 1992 b. Another more common equivalent is *khecara/ī*.
899 Herrmann-Pfandt 1992 a: 46.

Buddhism

Buddhism arose as one of several ascetic movements in India, and while antinomian and seemingly mad practices are in evidence among some of these groups, "madness" and transgressive practices are not what come to mind when the historical Buddha and early Buddhism are to be described.

Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah has pointed out that there is a well-entrenched duality within the Sangha between those monks who are labeled village or town dwellers (Pali: *gāmavāsī/nagaravāsī)* and those who are labeled forest dwellers (Pali: *āraññavāsī/vanavāsī*).[900] The latter emulated the meditative and itinerant life-style of the Buddha and his early followers, while the former settled down and often devoted their time to study and rituals.

The individual practices of the forest monks are called *dhutaguṇa* (Pali: *dhutaṅga*).[901] These practices are described in both Theravāda and Mahāyāna texts and two formulations became standard: a thirteen-item list in the former tradition, and a twelve-item list in the latter.[902] Several of the practices enumerated concern one's place of residence. Monks who abide by one of these *dhutaguṇa* practices should live in a forest, under a tree, in the open air or in charnel grounds. The monks who adhere to these ascetic practices are thus homeless wanderers, and in early Buddhism this kind of life-style seems to have been preferred. Although the monks were encouraged to travel and live the life of a homeless renunciate, since there was no rule against settling down, some monks abandoned the itinerant life-style of their founder and started to live permanently in what were to become the first monasteries.[903] This was the starting point of the monasticization that was to become of pivotal importance for the development of Buddhism. The monasteries became increasingly larger, and considerable changes took place regarding the life-style of the monks. Gombrich has stated that "most of these changes can be seen as a move away from asceticism" and that "the general tendency of early developments was towards an easier life for monks."[904]

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[900] Tambiah 1984: 53. For a detailed study of the meditative and non-monastic side of Buddhism, see Ray 1994.

[901] These practices are described in *Visuddhimagga*, see Buddhaghosa 1999: 58–81.

[902] The two lists are almost identical and since it is the Mahāyāna list that became used in Tibetan Buddhism it is sufficient to enumerate this list: (1) wear rags taken from a refuse heap (*pāṃśukūlika, gos phyag dar khrod pa*), (2) wear the three (monastic) robes (*traicīvarika, chos gos gsum pa*), (3) wear garments of felt (*nāmatika, phying ba pa*), (4) live on alms food (*paiṇḍapātika, bsod snyoms pa*), (5) follow one-eating (*aikāsanika, stan gcig pa*), (6) not eat after (the time when one should cease) (*khalupaścādbhaktika, zas phyis mi len pa*), (7) dwell in the forest (*āraṇyaka, dgon pa ba*), (8) live at the foot of a tree (*vṛkṣamūlika, shing drung pa*), (9) live in the open air (*ābhyavakāśika, bla gab med pa*), (10) live in charnel grounds (*śmāśānika, dur khrod pa*), (11) remain in a sitting posture, not lying down (*naiṣadika, tsog pu ba*), (12) accept any seat that may be offered (*yāthāsaṃstarika, gzhi ji bzhin pa*).

[903] According to Gregory Schopen permanent dwellings for the monks are not attested in the archaeological records until around the beginning of the Common Era (Schopen 2007: 61).

[904] Gombrich 1984: 80–81.

As referred to above, the forest-monks had primarily been devoted to the vocation of meditation and practice, while the vocation of those monks who settled down in towns and villages was that of books and learning.[905] Every monk, regardless of type (i.e. forest or village) should ideally combine these two different pursuits, but in reality there was a tendency to separate study and meditation. There were even some monks who argued that it was possible to obtain enlightenment without meditation.[906] The tendency of separating study and meditation is still visible in many Buddhist countries.[907]

It thus seems that the ascetic, homeless and wandering life-style of the monks often gave way to the more comfortable life of settled, institutionalized monasticism. From time to time however revivalist movements appear, and charismatic forest-type monks become popular and new proselytes join their way of life. Paradoxically, the forest monks who strive for a secluded and solitary life thus sometimes obtain large followings and many donations. This is another potential danger for their secluded and ascetic life-style. The tension between the ascetic monks of the forests and mountains with their focus on meditation and the monks of the monasteries with their focus upon studies seems to be ever present in the history of Buddhism.[908] However, it is important to note that both life-styles and their respective vocations were and are considered important in Buddhism.[909] The two sides were/are mutually interdependent, since it is impossible to practise and meditate without a tradition which maintains the Buddhist teachings.

There are several interesting similarities between the monks who carried out the *dhutaguṇa* practices and the mad yogins of Tibet. Both groups lived the life of homeless wanderers and devoted much of their time to secluded meditation practice. Both, moreover, sometimes lived in charnel grounds and even dressed in clothes or shrouds taken from corpses. "Given Indian fastidiousness about death pollution" this practice must have been considered

[905] See, for example, Tambiah 1984: 53.

[906] Gombrich has described this as an ancient debate attested in the canonical Pali scriptures (Gombrich 1996).

[907] Jane Bunnag has, for example, shown that many monks in present-day Thailand prefer studies over meditation. Studies are more provable and concrete, and they are also more easily assessed in terms of academic degrees and certificates. Meditation on the other hand is looked upon with skepticism by many monks and regarded as the domain of nuns, magicians and pilgrims (Bunnag 1984: 165).

[908] There is a historical and pragmatic explanation of the monks' tendency to focus on studies and learning. When the Buddha had passed away it was important to remember, preserve and maintain his teachings. The monks could no longer rely upon an enlightened master but had to take refuge in his teachings, so the teachings had to be memorized and written down. This process required specialized learned monks who devoted all their time and energy to this difficult task.

[909] Geoffrey Samuel has made a somewhat similar division between what he calls "clerical" and "shamanic" Buddhism (Samuel 1993: 3–23, 568–573). Samuel's categories, though designed for Tibetan Buddhism, resemble the division between forest and village monks in several ways.

very offensive and definitely transgressive.[910] We here thus find an old connection between the practices of the mad Tibetan yogins and the early Indian Buddhists.

Mahāyāna Buddhism

One of the important developments of Mahāyāna Buddhism was to shift the ideal from the figure of the *arhant* to the bodhisattva. Another important doctrinal development, which had a profound effect upon Buddhist practice, was to stress the empty (*śūnya*) nature of all phenomena. Both these characteristic elements of Mahāyāna Buddhism are important to be aware of when studying the mad yogins of Tibet, and can help us to come to terms with their odd behavior.

Let us start with the bodhisattva ideal; the bodhisattva was a "buddha to-be" and a bodhisattva had to perform what appear to be rather extreme acts of selflessness. For example, a bodhisattva had to be able to give away everything, even his own body if necessary. Many of the stories of bodhisattvas show how they act completely without self interest. The famous story of prince Viśvāntara (Pali: Vessantara) shows how the Buddha, in this particular previous life, did not hesitate to give away everything he had, even his wife and children, if someone asked for them. In another previous life, the Buddha offered his own body to a starving tigress and her cubs out of compassion, thereby saving the lives of the tigers by sacrificing his body. These kinds of actions do indeed differ radically from the way in which ordinary persons with attachment to their bodies and belongings act. Such "extreme" altruistic acts, whether performed in actuality, or contemplated about as an ideal, could very well appear mad in the eyes of people who do not share the bodhisattva's notion of egolessness.

A bodhisattva should also be prepared to ignore Buddhist rules and regulations if necessary. There are several examples of how the *prātimokṣa* vows (*so sor thar pa'i sdom pa*, "individual liberation vows") could sometimes be a hindrance for a bodhisattva in his or her attempts to help other beings. Thus we are told that a bodhisattva once killed a murderer-to-be before he had committed his crime. This he did to save the life of five hundred people who were about to be killed, and at the same time to save the murderer-to-be from having to be reborn in hell as a consequence of the negative act of killing. The bodhisattva did not care if the negative act of killing a human being would cause him future suffering. Instead he was solely concerned about the well-being of others. Since he had no egoistic motivation when he performed the negative act, he earned a huge amount of merit, we are told in the story.[911]

[910] Schopen 2007: 64.
[911] The story is cited in, for example, Patrul Rinpoche 1994: 125.

The other notion which became of particular importance in the Mahāyāna tradition was "emptiness"—*śūnyatā*. This idea is connected with the compassionate and selfless nature of the bodhisattva. According to the Mahāyāna teachings it is, in fact, this realization of the empty nature of the self and all phenomena that enables the bodhisattva to give away everything and act without any self-concern. The bodhisattva has realized that no self exists, and s/he therefore has no attachment and perceives things in a completely non-dualistic way. This enables the bodhisattva to act in a truly altruistic manner, which is very different from the way in which ordinary beings acts.

The doctrine of emptiness holds that all phenomena, seen from an absolute perspective, are neither pure nor impure, but empty. This idea gives rise to what, seen from the perspective of the older Buddhist schools, appears to be rather radical, even shocking, innovations. The doctrine of emptiness is clearly formulated in the *Heart Sūtra*:

> [...] Form is empty; emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is not other than emptiness. In the same way, feeling, discrimination, conditioning factors, and consciousnesses are empty. [...] [A]ll phenomena are empty, without characteristic, unproduced, unceased, stainless, not stainless, undiminished, unfilled. [...] Therefore [...] in emptiness there is no form, no feeling [...] no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, no aging and death [...]. In the same way, no suffering, origin, cessation, path, no wisdom, no attainment, no nonattainment.[912]

The Indian master Nāgārjuna, who is considered to be the founder of the *madhyamaka* philosophical system of Mahāyāna Buddhism, was perhaps the most important propagator of these ideas, and his influence upon Tibetan Buddhism was huge. According to Nāgārjuna and his madhyamaka philosophical system, samsara and nirvana are not different entities, but share the same fundamental characteristic, namely emptiness. This entails that in the eyes of a realized master, samsara is nirvana. John Ardussi asserts that the philosophical position of the *mādhyamika*, developed by Nāgārjuna in India underlies the behavior of the mad yogins of Tibet.[913] This does not mean that the mad yogins necessarily were expert mādhyamikas, however, but merely that the madhyamaka philosophy facilitates a non-dual and transgressive behavior. The Tibetan mad yogins could thus claim that their realization of the empty nature of all phenomena was demonstrated by their acting in mad ways.

Another important Mahāyāna term which is used when adopting unconventional or new ways of practice is "method" (*upāya*).[914] A bodhisattva could, and should, apply various methods to help others. If necessary, he (or

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[912] Lopez 1996: vii.
[913] Ardussi 1972: 30–31; see also, Ardussi and Epstein 1978: 327–329.
[914] For more information about *upāya* in Mahāyāna Buddhism, see: Pye 2003.

she) could even act insane or transgress Buddhist precepts to benefit others and spread the Buddhist doctrine.

Tantric Practice

Contrary to the way in which the early Buddhists and also the bodhisattvas are generally presented, gTsang smyon sometimes acted in a very outrageous and seemingly crazy way. This type of extreme or radical asceticism is not common among early Buddhists, but it is found among some of the tantric Buddhist masters. gTsang smyon and his disciples referred to the Buddhist siddhas and to tantric Buddhist practices when his unusual way of behaving was questioned. The most important and relevant place to look when analyzing and contextualizing gTsang smyon and his way of practising Buddhism is therefore Tantric Buddhism to which we now will turn.

Tantric Buddhism is also sometimes called Vajrayāna (Adamantine Vehicle) or Mantrayāna (Mantra Vehicle) and although it had the same basic doctrinal foundation as the Mahāyāna tradition, it differed rather radically in terms of its methodology. Especially the higher or later forms of tantric practices (i.e. *Mahāyogatantra* and *Yoginītantra*) prescribed methods of a transgressive, antinomian and sometimes seemingly mad character.[915] According to tantric exegesis the tantric practices are much more efficient than the "sūtric" ones and at a rather early date a differentiation between the gradual and long "Way of the Perfections" (*pāramitānaya*) and the direct and short "Way of Mantras" (*mantranaya*) was made within the Mahāyāna tradition. The latter path is considered more advanced and potentially dangerous, and as the term shows, the use of mantras is especially important in it. By following the path of mantra (i.e. tantra) it is possible to reach the goal—enlightenment—within a single lifetime according to tantric exegetes. Despite methodological differences, Tantric Buddhism is thus considered to be a part of the Mahāyāna tradition.

The central practice in Tantric Buddhism is the *sādhana* (or *sādhanā*) practice.[916] This is a ritual practice centered on a tantric deity (*iṣṭadevatā*, *yi*

[915] There are different ways of classifying the tantras and I am using a fivefold system in this section: *Kriyātantra*, *Caryātantra*, *Yogatantra*, *Mahāyogatantra* and *Yoginītantra*. This classification is broadly chronological, and it was developed within the Indian tantric tradition itself. According to the tantric exegetes, the five-fold system represents a gradual development, from lower or more basic tantras to higher or more advanced ones. The newer schools of Tibetan Buddhism (*gsar ma*) usually use a four-fold classification system: *Kriyātantra* (*bya rgyud*), *Caryātantra* (*spyod rgyud*), *Yogatantra* (*rnal'byor rgyud*), and *Anuttarayogatantra* (*rnal 'byor bla na med pa rgyud*). *Anuttarayogatantra* is in turn sub-divided into "mother tantras" (*ma rgyud*) and "father tantras" (*pha rgyud*), the former term refers to *Yoginītantra* while the latter refers to *Mahāyogatantra*.

[916] "Means of accomplishment" (*grub thabs*).

dam)[917] which the yogin evokes by means of visualizations and mantra recitations. While this technique is also found in Hinduism, the setting in which it is employed is not. The ritual starts with taking refuge to the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) and generating an altruistic mind (*bodhicitta*). Moreover, both before and after the visualizations and mantra recitations are performed, the practitioner should ritually evoke the state of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). The setting thus situates the ritual within a basic Buddhist and Mahāyānist ethical and doctrinal context.[918]

The *sādhana* practice is divided into two phases, the "generation phase" (*utpattikrama, bskyed rim*) and the "completion phase" (*niṣpannakrama/saṃpannakrama, rdzogs rim*).[919] During the first phase (the generation phase), the practitioner visualizes the *yidam* and his maṇḍala. The sādhanas could be more or less elaborate, from short texts which take only a couple of minutes to read, to elaborate texts which take several hours to read. The visualizations follow a similar pattern in different sādhanas, but depending on the length of the texts and the type of tantra (i.e. *Kriyātantra, Caryātantra, Yogatantra, Mahāyogatantra, Yoginītantra*) variations occur. Generally, the generation phase consists of the following scenario: Out of emptiness a seed syllable emerges and from it the deity is created. The deity is thereafter described in some detail: its color, number of arms, ornaments, bodily position, surroundings, entourage (its maṇḍala), and so forth. Then, worship and offerings (*pūjā*) are performed towards the visualized deity. Depending on the text, one either visualizes the deity in front of oneself (*mdun bskyed*), or in the vase at the altar (*bum bskyed*) or one visualizes oneself as the deity (*bdag bskyed*). These various ways of visualizing the deity are sometimes performed in succession in more elaborate rituals, but in shorter sādhanas the focus is upon one of them. The deity that is being visualized (or created if you will) in the mind of the practitioner is called "conventional being" (*samayasattva, dam tshig sems pa/dpa'*). This mentally created deity is then

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[917] Contrary to prior practice, I will render Sanskrit before Tibetan in the parentheses and footnotes in these sections, since they are mainly indological. Although these sections deal with Indic material, I will include Tibetan words in parentheses rather frequently, sometimes without giving Sanskrit equivalents. The reason for this is that these indological sections are necessary background material for a subsequent discussion about how these practices were used by gTsang smyon and the other mad yogins of Tibet.

[918] Compare with Williams (with Anthony Tribe) 2003: 229.

[919] What follows is a very abbreviated and simplified description of the sādhana practice within Tantric Buddhism. For a detailed study of sādhana rituals, see Beyer 1973. Some other accounts are found in: Bokar 1991 and 1999; Cozort 1996; Kongtrul 2002; Lopez 2002: 224–227; Williams (with Anthony Tribe) 2003: 223–231. It should be kept in mind that practical information about how Buddhist sādhana practice is performed generally stems from the Tibetan tradition where this type of practice is still considered very important. Many Tibetan lamas, both of earlier and more recent times, have commented upon these practices. Although some Indian commentaries are extant, Tibetan translations and commentaries written by Tibetan lamas have informed and dominated the way in which tantric Buddhist practice is conceived in the West and elsewhere.

ritually transformed into the actual deity, the "wisdom being" (*jñānasattva, ye shes sems pa/dpa'*). When this occurs the deity is actually present, or as Anthony Tribe describes it, "at that point the sādhaka becomes the deity" (if it is a self-visualization), or the deity "really appears" (if it is a visualization in front of oneself).[920]

An important and often dominating part of the ritual, at least when it is performed as a meditation practice, is mantra recitation.[921] Each deity has its own mantra and the same deity often has several different mantras associated with its different aspects. These mantras fulfil specific functions when recited, and they are believed to possess certain powers. To recite the mantra in combination with the accompanying visualization is to activate this innate power, which in turn is associated with the meditation deity (*yidam*). Hence, compassion is believed to be generated and spread by the recitation of the mantra of Avalokiteśvara (the Bodhisattva of Compassion)—*Oṃ maṇi-padme hūṃ*—for example.

Having visualized the deity and recited its mantra, the next of the two phases occurs—the "completion phase". During the "completion phase" the notion of being separated from the deity disappears, and the deity—as an expression of enlightenment—and the practitioner's own mind are no longer perceived as separate entities. Also this phase of the sādhana practice can be sub-divided into several parts, the two main ones being: the "completion phase with signs"[922] and the "completion phase without signs".[923]

The "completion phase with signs" consists of several yogic practices that involve manipulating the subtle energies (*prāṇa*) or winds (*vāyu, rlung*) that are believed to circulate in channels (*nāḍī, rtsa*) in the subtle body, thought to underlie the gross physical body of the practitioner. There are three main channels and several minor ones in which these winds circulate, and the channels are wrapped around the central channel (*avadhūti, dbu ma*) at several points of constriction called wheels (*cakra, 'khor lo*). There are also subtle essences called drops (*bindu, thig le*) which are yogically manipulated. These types of yogic practices are termed "with signs" because the practitioner continues to visualize him or herself as a deity while doing them. According to the yogic teachings, the winds serve as a vehicle for the mind,

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920 Williams (with Anthony Tribe) 2003: 230.

921 Sādhanas are often carried out as regular, communal rituals, and when this is the case mantra recitation often constitutes a rather small part of the overall ritual (i.e. only a small numbers of mantras are performed, perhaps one hundred eight). When performed as a meditation practice (in retreat or during a practitioner's daily personal practice) the mantras are counted, and a large number of mantras are recited during each meditation session. Several such sessions could be carried out everyday, and it can take months, even years, until a certain practice is completed (i.e. the required number of mantras for the particular practice, perhaps a hundred thousand or a million mantras, have been recited).

922 *mTshan bcas rdzogs rim.*

923 *mTshan med rdzogs rim.* This is only one of several ways of dividing the completion phase practices. For an example of another, more elaborate, way of doing it, see Bentor 2001: 331–333.

but because of dualistic clinging the wind enters the left- and right-hand channels, *lalanā* (*rkyang ma*) and *rasanā* (*ro ma*), instead of the central channel. This gives rise to falsely distinguishing between subject and object, which in turn leads to defiled mental states (*kleśa*) and negative actions (*karma*). Through yogic practices, the winds can be brought into the central channel and transformed into wisdom.[924]

The most famous system involving these kinds of advanced yogic practices is the Six Dharmas of Nāropa: "fierce goddess" (*caṇḍālī*, *gtum mo*), "illusory body" (*māyākāya*, *sgyu lus*), "dream" (*svapna*, *rmi lam*), "clear light" (*prabhāsvara*, *'od gsal*), transference (*saṃkrānti*, *'pho ba*) and "intermediate state" (*antarābhava*, *bar do*), which, according to tradition, Nāropa received from Tilopa.[925]

During the completion phase without signs no more visualizations or recitations take place. Instead the yogin "remains in a blissfully radiant and awakened but formless state."[926] The completion phase without signs refers to non-dual practices aimed at directly realizing or perceiving the nature of the mind. There are different practices of this type; the newer schools of Tibetan Buddhism (*gsar ma*) often refer to them as the "Great Seal" (*Mahāmudrā*, *phyag rgya chen po*) while the earlier school of Tibetan Buddhism (*rNying ma*) refers to them as *Atiyoga* or "Great Completion" (*rdzogs pa chen po*).[927] While the latter term is unique to the rNying ma and Bon schools,[928] Mahāmudrā is a very common and important term widely used in later Indian tantrism. Mahāmudrā became especially important in the bKa' brgyud tradition to which gTsang smyon belonged.

To be allowed and able to practise a tantric sādhana and the advanced yogic practices associated with the completion phase, the practitioner has to receive "empowerment" or "consecration" (*abhiṣeka*, *dbang*) and instructions from a guru. The empowerment ceremony was originally modeled upon the coronation ritual of kingship and consisted of a number of consecratory moments.[929] Eventually a fourfold series of empowerments was developed in which the earlier types of empowerments were combined into a single empowerment known as "vase empowerment" (*kalaśābhiṣeka*, *bum dbang*). In addition to this, three other types of empowerments were added:

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[924] Nālandā Translation Committee 1986: 235, Lopez 2002: 215, Williams (with Anthony Tribe) 2003: 200, 230.

[925] To describe these advanced yogic practices in detail is beyond the scope of the present study. Guenther has described the Six Dharmas of Nāropa at some length (Guenther 1986: 131–249).

[926] Williams (with Anthony Tribe) 2003: 231.

[927] It should be noted that these two terms have a very broad meaning and may be used to describe many different things. However, among the bKa' brgyud pa*s* Mahāmudrā is often used for the completion stage practice without signs. Concerning the term *atiyoga* or *mahāsandhi*, as it is also sometimes called, it seem to be a later translation of Tibetan *rdzogs pa chen po*, and as far as I know is not attested in Indian texts.

[928] See, for example, Dalton 2003: 730.

[929] Davidson 2002: 123–127.

"secret empowerment" (*guhyābhiṣeka, gsang dbang*), "wisdom empowerment" (*prajñājñānābhiṣeka, shes rab ye shes kyi dbang*) and "fourth empowerment" (*caturthābhiṣeka, dbang bzhi pa*).[930] These empowerments had the function of introducing the tantric practitioner to the meditation-deity which he would visualize and ritually evoke in his sādhana practice. The last three empowerments were taken from the Yoginītantras and both the secret empowerment and wisdom empowerment have an explicitly sexual content according to the tantric exegetical literature.[931]

Another common and important tantric practice is the tantric feast (*gaṇacakra, tshogs kyi 'khor lo/tshogs 'khor*), which is performed on a regular basis by tantric practitioners. Its purpose is to purify transgressions of tantric commitments (*samaya, dam tshig*) and celebrate the phenomenal world. During a *gaṇacakra*, desire and sense perceptions are made part of the path.[932] Music, food and drink are offered and the food and drink are then consumed by the participants. Tribe mentions that these ritual gatherings "can be seen to particularly focus on the impure and forbidden."[933] The underlying idea of the *gaṇacakra* gatherings was that the ritual consumption of what was considered impure and forbidden could help the participant to approach a non-dual state of mind.[934]

The Yoginītantras became an accepted part of Indian Buddhist monastic institutions in the ninth century and the transgressive and antinomian elements contained in them were interpreted in a symbolic way. Sexual practices and the ritual consumption of impure substances were not carried out, but only visualized. This made it possible for monks and nuns to practice the tantric sādhanas, receive and bestow abhiṣekas (empowerments) and participate in gaṇacakras (tantric feasts) without violating their monastic vows. A large commentarial literature developed which helped to integrate the controversial elements found in the Mahāyogatantras and Yoginītantras into a Mahāyāna Buddhistic context. However, despite the attempts to domesticate Tantric Buddhism, the mere existence of antinomian and transgressive elements within it posed a problem. If taken literally, Tantric Buddhism made it possible to justify transgressive and antinomian behavior, sometimes of a violent and sexual nature. As seen in the life stories of gTsang smyon, it

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930 For a short description of these empowerments, see Williams (with Anthony Tribe) 2003: 231–235.

931 For a description of them, see, for example, Snellgrove 2002: 243–277.

932 Nālandā Translation Committee 1986: 224.

933 Williams (with Anthony Tribe) 2003: 236.

934 Williams (with Anthony Tribe) 2003: 236. See also David Snellgrove's description of the *gaṇacakra*, Snellgrove 2002: 160–170. It should be noted that the transgressive elements of the *gaṇacakra* are more or less absent from the ritual nowadays (i.e. non-alcoholic beverages are used instead of alcohol) and this mere symbolic transgression was probably the normal way of performing *gaṇacakras* in former times also, at least among the so-called domesticated tantric practitioners.

seems that he practised Tantric Buddhism more literally than others. What the monks only visualized, gTsang smyon sometimes acted out.

The Heruka

Among the different tantric deities belonging to the Yoginītantras, the most important ones are probably Cakrasaṃvara (Saṃvara) and Hevajra.[935] These two deities were central to both the late tantric Buddhists of India and also their Tibetan heirs. There are many tantric texts, commentaries, sādhanas, empowerment rituals and so forth associated with these two deities, and they both have several manifestations.

Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra belong to a specific category of tantric deities called herukas. A heruka is a wrathful manifestation of enlightenment who is generally depicted standing erect, surrounded by fire, and adorned with bone ornaments and various other artifacts taken from a charnel ground, such as human heads, blood and intestines. The heruka is often depicted sexually embracing a wild tantric goddess (i.e. *ḍākinī* or *yoginī*), and also surrounded by a group of such goddesses. The overall picture of the heruka is thus far removed from that of a buddha or bodhisattva, and even from that of a tantric deity of the older or basic classes of tantras (i.e. *Kriyātantra*, *Caryātantra*, *Yogatantra*). Instead, the heruka resembles Śiva in his more destructive manifestation, such as Bhairava and Rudra.[936] The relationship between Śiva and the heruka is complex. There are several origination myths of the Heruka which explain how he appeared in the world and why. These myths of origination also explain the relationship between the Heruka and Śiva. According to these Buddhist myths, a heruka is a manifestation of a buddha disguised as a fierce charnel-ground deity as a means to benefit the world in times of great difficulty.[937] As part of this mission, in the words of David B. Gray, the Heruka takes "on the appearance of Bhairava and his host as a compassionate strategy (*upāya*) for the conversion of their followers."[938] The origin myth of the Heruka thus "represents the adoption of non-Buddhist elements while at the same time representing the subordination of these elements within a Buddhist cosmic hierarchy."[939] This is illustrated graphically by the placement of the Śaiva deities under the feet of their Buddhist vanquisher (i.e. the Heruka).

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935 Several studies and translations of *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* and *Hevajra Tantra* have been carried out, see for example Gray 2007, Tsuda 1973 (*Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*); Farrow and Menon 1992, Snellgrove 1959 (*Hevajra Tantra*).
936 Gray 2007: 43.
937 Gray 2007: 40.
938 Gray 2007: 52.
939 Gray 2007: 53.

As meditation deities (*yidam*) the herukas were important for Buddhist yogins and yoginīs who visualized a heruka and recited its mantra in their attempt to "become a heruka". As a manifestation of enlightenment the heruka was ultimately seen as representing the inner potential of the practitioner and, as mentioned above, the goal of the tantric practices was to realize one's own mind as being identical with the meditation deity.

The Siddha

The Yoginītantras not only presented new and radically different methods of Buddhist practice, but also a new type of Buddhist saint: the *siddha* (accomplished one, *grub thob*). The siddhas of Vajrayāna Buddhism were active in India from the eight to the twelfth centuries, and they taught a form of Buddhism that, in spirit, doctrine, and practice, defied and challenged the traditional, monastically oriented Buddhist institutions.[940] As the name shows, a siddha was believed to possess two types of *siddhi* (accomplishment, *dngos grub*), namely "supramundane accomplishment" (*lokottarasiddhi, mchog gi dngos grub*) and "mundane accomplishments" (*laukikasiddhi, thun mong gi dngos grub*).[941] While the former term refers to awakening, the latter refers to miraculous powers such as the ability to fly, the ability to become invisible, the ability to travel under ground, and so forth. It is the supramundane accomplishment which is the real aim of Buddhist practice, but since it is invisible it is difficult to display to others. The mundane accomplishments, on the other hand, are seen as external signs of having accomplished the completion phase practices[942] and could be demonstrated if necessary.

The siddhas often traveled freely across social, geographical and religious borders. Gray describes them as a liminal group of renunciant yogins and yoginīs who constituted what might be called the "siddha movement."[943] The siddha movement, both Hindu and Buddhist, appears to have originated in a distinct subculture which could be termed "the cult of the charnel ground".[944]

The siddhas seem to have been a motley and colorful crowd, and it is very hard to define a siddha in terms of his (or occasionally her) social class, occupation and religious affiliation. In Abhayadatta's famous account of eighty-four short siddha life stories we find the most variegated types of people.[945] Among the masters depicted in the text there are a hunter, a liar, a

940 Wallis 2003: 3.
941 It should be noted that the Tibetan terms mean "supreme accomplishment" and "ordinary accomplishment", respectively. It is noteworthy that this division between worldy and otherworldy attainments is an old one in Buddhism.
942 Rigzin 1997: 121.
943 Gray 2007: 7.
944 Gray 2007: 7.
945 Translated into English in Dowman 1985 and Robinson 1979.

senile weaver, a thief, a gambler, a king, a monk, an alchemist, a bird catcher, a pearl diver, a musician, a housewife and a potter, to just mention a few examples.[946] Many of these people thus lived their lives in ways which were difficult or impossible to combine with traditional Buddhist values. One of the characteristic features of Tantric Buddhism was that it offered people whom traditional Buddhism could not help a path to salvation. Since the tantric methods could be practised without necessarily having to give up one's life-style/occupation, however unsuitable it might seem, even prostitutes, thieves, and hunters could practice Buddhism and become siddhas. As mentioned earlier, the siddhas often communicated their inner experiences by means of tantric songs. A noteworthy aspect of their message, which is sometimes reflected in the siddha songs, was a sharp critique of the established religions. Shashibhusan Dasgupta has stated that salient features of their teachings are "a spirit of protest and criticism", "an aversion to recondite scholarship", and "a scathing criticism of the formalities of life and religion".[947]

Since the siddhas were so different from one another it is difficult to describe their general characteristics. It is, however, striking that many of the siddhas behaved unusually and sometimes resembled madmen. Anthony Tribe remarks that many of the siddhas were non-monastics and non-celibates who lived on the margins of society, frequenting charnel grounds and generally behaving in an unconventional manner.[948] Similarly, James B. Robinson states that "siddhas at times exhibited very unconventional behavior."[949] So if there is any specific characteristic feature of the siddhas it would probably be their unconventionality.

Abhayadatta's collection of life stories is a good example of how the siddhas are often depicted as highly unconventional individuals. The siddha Kalapa, for example, started acting according to "spontaneous behavior" (*lhug pa'i spyod pa*) after he had "dissolved the dualistic idea of self and other" (*bdag gzhan gnyis su dmigs pa stor*).[950] Kalapa's unusual way of acting caused the people who saw him to call him a crazy man (*smyon pa*

[946] For more examples, see the table of contents in Dowman's English translation of Abhayadatta's text (Dowman 1985).

[947] Dasgupta 1962: 51–61. It should be noticed that Dasgupta designates the siddhas *sahajiyās*. For interesting parallels of songs that sharply criticize all conceivable forms of religious practice and worship, compare the songs ascribed to the Indian Siddha Saraha (Jackson, R. 2004: 53–59) with a song ascribed to the Tibetan mad yogin'Brug pa kun legs (Dowman and Paljor 1983: 107–108; for the Tibetan text, see Brag phug dge bshes dGe 'dun rin chen 1971: 82–84).

[948] Williams (with Anthony Tribe) 2003: 239.

[949] Robinson 1979: 6.

[950] Due to the fact that Abhayadatta's text is only extant in Tibetan, and since it is the Tibetan text that directly or indirectly could have influenced the mad yogins of Tibet, I have chosen to insert Tibetan instead of Sanskrit in parenthesis.

cig).[951] Another siddha, Niguṇa, received the following instructions from a tantric yogin:

> Subject and object have no reality whatsoever,
> yet beings are not enlightened.
> Suffering, they are pitiful in their torment,
> which from the beginning, has no reality.
> Appearances are inseparable from emptiness;
> the pure light is continually present.
> And though you act like a crazy man,
> you will enter into the pure city.[952]

The female siddha, Lakṣmīnkarā, pretended to be insane (*smyo 'rdzun byed*) when she discovered that she had been given in marriage to a non-Buddhist prince of Laṅkā. Utterly disgusted and shocked when seeing the cruel behavior of the entourage of her new husband, she fainted.

> After she recovered from her faint, she gave her wealth to the citizens of the city and her ornaments to her retinue. [...] She cut her hair and stripped herself naked; then she smeared ashes and coal on her body. Although she acted demented, she unwaveringly set about her heart's aim. [...][953]

Thinking that the princess had become truly (i.e. pathologically) mad, everyone at the court became worried and sad. Doctors were sent for, and medicines prepared, but Lakṣmīnkarā refused to accept any treatment. Eventually, she managed to escape; full of revulsion for samsara she acted like a "demented ascetic" (*smyon ma'i brtul zhugs*). From that point on she stayed at charnel grounds, and after seven years she attained accomplishments (*siddhi*) and became a siddha.[954]

The mad yogins of Tibet were often classified as siddhas (*grub thob*) and they often looked and acted very similarly to the way in which the Indian siddhas acted. The mad yogins of Tibet and the Indian siddhas practised the same tantric rituals, had the same *yidam*s, and recited the same mantras. Some of these practices prescribe a particular behavior as part of the practice, and it is to this behavior and to other practices and notions related to madness and unconventionality in Tantric Buddhism, that we now will turn.

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951 Robinson 1979: 111. For the Tibetan text, see Abhayadatta 1998: 114–116.

952 Robinson 1979: 189; Abhayadatta 1998: 206–207: *gzung 'dzin gang yang ma grub par / / ma rtogs sems can thams cad ni / / sdug bsngal gyis mnar snying re rje / / de yang gdod nas ma grub ste / / snang dang stong pa dbyer med pa'i / / 'od gsal rgyud la skyes nas kyang / / smyon pa lta bu'i spyod pa yis / / grong khyer dag tu rgyug par bya / /.*

953 Robinson 1979: 251; Abhayadatta 1998: 271–272: *de nas brgyal ba sangs pa dang / grong khyer ba de rnams la nor rnam byin / 'khor kyn la rgyan cha bskur [...] lus la mar nag dang sol ba byugs / skra bshig gcer bur phyung nas smyo rdzun byed cing / snying por don las ma g.yos par bzhugs pas /.*

954 Robinson 1979: 252. For the Tibetan text, see Abhayadatta 1998: 271–272.

Madness as a Practice in Tantric Buddhism

There are several technical terms in the tantric scriptures which refer to practices and ways of behavior which seem mad, or at least highly unconventional. These terms are mainly found in texts belonging to the Mahāyoga and the Yoginī class of tantras, such as Guhyasamāja, Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara Tantra.

An important term which is related to the unconventional and sometimes seemingly crazy behavior of the siddhas is *samarasa* ("equal taste", *ro mnyam*). In the *Hevajra Tantra* it is said that there is no sense of duality in the ultimate state of *sahaja*.[955] In such a state everything—whether the lowest, or the middle or the best—should be realized as being the same.[956] The practical implication of this is the realization that there is no ultimate difference between what is usually regarded as desirable and what is usually regarded as undesirable. A siddha should therefore ideally be able to drink alcohol without developing a craving for it, as well as urine without feeling any disgust. Since he or she has gotten rid of conceptual thinking and abides in non-dual cognition, everything has the same taste (*samarasa*). The *Hevajra Tantra* explains how a tantric practitioner should act: "Enjoying food and drink he should take it as it comes, making no distinction between that which is liked or disliked, eatable or uneatable, drinkable or undrinkable. Nor should he ever wonder whether a thing is suitable or unsuitable."[957]

Yet another notion which is related to unconventional practices is the paradoxical practice of reversal (*viparītabhāvanā*, *zlog pa'i sgom pa*). According to tantric practice it is possible to be liberated by the very same thing that usually entangles beings in samsara. This "homeopathic" practice is described in the *Hevajra Tantra* as follows:

> With the very poison, a little of which would kill any other being, a man who understands poison would dispel another poison. Just as a man who suffers with flatulence is given beans to eat, so that wind may overcome wind in the way of a homeopathic cure, so existence is purified by existence in the countering of discursive thought by its own kind. [...] Those things by which men of evil conduct are bound, others turn into means and gain thereby release from the bonds of existence. By passion the world is bound, by passion too it is released, but by the heretical buddhists this practice of reversals is not known.[958]

It is quite reasonable to assume that a person who deliberately acted in a manner contradictory to normative Buddhism and experienced, or at least tried to experience, everything as equal, could be regarded as mad.

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[955] For a more detailed description and analysis of *sahaja* ("innate", *lhan cig tu skyes pa*), see Kvaerne 1975 and 1977; Dasgupta 1962.
[956] Cited in Dasgupta 1962: 31.
[957] Snellgrove (trans.) 1959: 65.
[958] Snellgrove (trans.) 1959: 93.

There is also a more explicit use of the word madness in the tantras, however, and Padmavajra's (second half of the eight century) *Guhyasiddhi*[959] states that a yogin should act in the following way when practising the "secret conduct" (*guhyacaryā, gsang ba'i spyod pa*): "Assuming the image of insanity (*unmattarūpam, smyon pa'i gzugs*), he remains silent, in deep contemplation. Thus he wanders around like a demon, through contemplation on his personal divinity."[960] The yogin is thus encouraged to act like a madman and in the twenty-fourth verse of the sixth chapter of *Guhyasiddhi* another important term is given, namely "the observance of madness" (*unmattavrata, smyon pa'i brtul zhugs*).[961] This particular observance is also mentioned in other tantric texts and the *Saṃvarodaya Tantra* (*dPal bde mchog sdom pa 'byung ba*), which is an explanatory tantra of the Cakrasaṃvara, similarly describes how the yogin at an advanced stage of his practice should practise the "observance of madness" (*unmattavrata*).[962]

The observance of madness is also described in Maitrīpa's (=Advayavajra, ca. 1007–1085) *Tattvadaśaka* (*Ten Verses on Reality*). Glenn Wallis translates the passage as follows: "deviating from worldly norms, he depends on this vow of the madman [*unmattavrata*]. He does everything free from supports, adorned with his own basis of power."[963] That the observance of madness was regarded as important by some of the later Indian tantric exegetes is proven by the fact that Maitrīpa—who happens to be a key figure in the Mahāmudrā lineage of the bKa' brgyud tradition to which gTsang smyon belonged—discusses it in his *Kudṛṣṭinirghātana* (*Uprooting of False Views*). In this text, Maitrīpa attempts to integrate the controversial siddha-oriented elements, which are epitomized in the mad observance, with mainstream Buddhism. Maitrīpa's strategy for doing this is to say that also those who abide by the observance of madness should follow the basic or preliminary Buddhist practices (*ādikarma*).[964]

959 *Secret Accomplishment*, *gSang ba grub pa*. Wayman notes that Tsong Khapa wrote commentaries upon this text, which shows that it was influential among Tibetan Buddhists in the 15th century (Wayman 1991: 90–91).
960 *Guhyasiddhi* 1987, chapter 6, verse 13. The translation is taken from Davidson 2002: 222. It should be noted that Davidson translates *Subhāṣitasamgraha*'s summary of *Guhyasiddhi*. This particular part seems to be identical with *Guhyasiddhi*, chapter 6, verse 13, which in Tibetan translation is rendered as follows: *mnyam gzhag mi smra gyur pa yis / / smyon pa'i gzugs su gzhag par bya / / rang 'dod lha yi rnal 'byor gyis / / sha za bzhin du kun du 'khyams /*.
961 *Guhyasiddhi* 1987, chapter 6, verse 24.
962 Tsuda 1974: 305.
963 Wallis 2003: 13, n. 29; *lokadharmavyatīto 'sau unmattavratam āśritaḥ / sarvaḥ karoty anālambaḥ svādhiṣṭhānavibhūṣitaḥ*. For an alternative translation, see Mathes 2008: 434, n. 169.
964 Mathes 2008: 37; Wallis 2003: 17.

Caryā

We saw above that the term "observance of madness" (*unmattavrata*) appeared in the section about "secret conduct" (*guhyacaryā*) in *Guhyasiddhi*. Similarly, the above-quoted section about *unmattavrata* from *Saṃvarodaya Tantra* is taken from the chapter which explains the conduct (*caryā*). The Sanskrit word *caryā* is one of the most important and commonly used terms in connection with madness as a tantric practice.[965] *Caryā*, or *spyod pa* as the Tibetans translated the term, is sometimes presented as a part of the triad: "view" (*dṛṣṭi, lta ba*), "meditation" (*bhāvanā, sgom pa*) and "conduct" (*caryā, spyod pa*). The latter term could be translated in different ways, and it is often translated as "practice", "action", "conduct" and "behavior". *Caryā* thus deals with how a practitioner should behave, and generally refers to a disciplined way of acting and behaving. What is regarded as disciplined or proper conduct in the tantras is not necessarily regarded as such in the sūtras, however, and the prescribed conduct also differs within the different classes of tantra. The Tibetans sometimes use the expression "enter into the conduct" (*spyod pa la 'jug pa/gshegs pa*) to denote a stage in tantric practice when the practitioner starts to behave in a certain way and interacts more directly with the world. According to Toni Huber, *caryā* is a form of wandering asceticism that takes place during the completion phase of tantric practice.[966] In many tantras a specific chapter is devoted to conduct. As seen above, it was often to the *caryā* chapter of *Hevajra Tantra* that gTsang smyon himself referred when his strange and bizarre ways were questioned.[967] In this particular chapter it is stated that when the yogin gains finality of his perfection in Hevajra he must: "wear the sacred ear-rings, and the circlet on his head; on his wrists the bracelets, and the girdle round his waist, rings around his ankles, bangles round his arms; he wears the bone-necklace and for his dress a tiger-skin, and his food must be the five ambrosias."[968]

In addition to wearing these rather spectacular garments, the yogin should arrange his piled-up hair as a crest and secure shards of skulls to the crest. He should besmear his body with ashes, wear a sacred thread of hair, and

[965] It is important not to confuse the tantric class called *Caryātantra* with the more general use of *caryā*. *Caryā* is a very common Sanskrit term and its use depends on the context. In Mahāyāna is is often used together with *bodhi*, thus we have *bodhicaryā* "enlightened conduct". *Caryā* is important in all the tantric classes and the discussions that follow mainly concern how the term is understood in the *Mahāyogatantra* and *Yoginītantra* classes.

[966] Huber 2000: 9.

[967] This chapter is translated in Snellgrove 1959: 63–72. gTsang smyon referred to this chapter on several occasions, see for example G: 32–33.

[968] Snellgrove 1959: 63. The five ambrosias (*pañcāmṛta*) are: feces, urine, blood, human flesh, and white and red regenerative substances. There are several variations of this list, and the five substances it contains are generally regarded as having a symbolic rather than literal meaning.

carry a tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*), a small hand-drum (*ḍamaru*) and a skull-cup (*kapāla*).[969]

Moreover it is stated that "Meditation is good if performed at night beneath a lonely tree or in a cemetary, or in the mother's house,[970] or in some unfrequented spot."[971] When it comes to behavior the tantra encourages the yogin to find himself a consort, sing and dance and to "abandon desire and folly, fear and anger, and any sense of shame."[972]

Vratacaryā

Another key term that we have already encountered, which is used in the Buddhist tantras in connection with unconventional ways of practice, is *vrata* (observance, vow).[973] *Vrata* is a common and general term which is often used in Indian religions and, like *caryā*, it is only in specific instances that it denotes a mad or unconventional way of acting. The Tibetans translated *vrata* with the term *brtul zhugs*, and this Tibetan term is often encountered in reference to the seemingly crazy practices of the Tibetan mad yogins. The compound *brtul zhugs spyod pa* which translates the Sanskrit *vratacaryā* is particularly common. The literal meaning of this term is "conduct" (*spyod pa*) of "taming" (*brtul*) and "entering" (*zhugs*).[974] According to sDe gzhung Rin po che (1906–1987) the meaning of this technical term is "overcoming worldly conduct and entering into the conduct of the Buddhas. Or else, taming bad behavior and entering into perfect conduct."[975] Like *vrata*, *vratacaryā* is difficult to translate into English, and I have translated the compound as "disciplined conduct".[976] Cyrus Stearns mentions that "the original range of meaning for this expression is extremely wide, sometimes denoting any type of religious behavior in general and at other times indicating a specific disciplined style."[977] Since most of the descriptions concerning how and

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969 Snellgrove (trans.) 1959: 65. See also Wayman 1973: 117–118.
970 "Mother's house" is a place where there are statues of the seven mother-godessess, Brāhmī, Śivā and so on (Snellgrove 1959: 63, n. 6).
971 Snellgrove (trans.) 1959: 63.
972 Snellgrove (trans.) 1959: 64–65.
973 For a short description of the general meaning of the term and its use, see, for example, Samuel 2008: 131–133, 161–162.
974 Stearns 2007: 60.
975 sDe gzhung cited in Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 18, n. 42: *'jig rten gyi spyod pa brtul / sangs rgyas kyi spyod pa la zhugs / yang na spyod pa ma rung ba brtul / spyod pa yang dag pa la zhugs /*.
976 The following examples show how difficult it is to translate this term. *brTul zhugs* (*vrata*) has been translated as: "taming the engagement" (Bentor 2001); "vow", "way of acting" (Das 1998); "penance", "manner" (Jäschke 1977); "ritual observance" (Wayman 1973). *brTul zhugs spyod pa* (*vratacaryā*) has been translated as: "to do penance" (Das 1998, Jäschke 1977); "deliberate behavior" Stearns 2007; "disciplined behavior", (Stearns [Kalnins] 1985); "chosen behavior" (Stearns 1980) and "yogic discipline" (Nālandā translation committee 1986 and Padma Karpo Translation Committee).
977 Stearns 2007: 59–60.

why these practices should be performed are found in the Tibetan exegetical tradition, and since it is this tradition that is most relevant to understanding the mad yogins of Tibet, a summarized account based on Tibetan sources will be given below. It is, however important to be aware of the fact that the Tibetans based their exegesis upon Sanskrit texts, and a brief account of what is said about *vratacaryā* in one of these texts will therefore first be provided.

The *vratacaryā* practice is explained in Āryadeva's *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa*,[978] which is one of the most systematic treatments of the advanced yogic techniques of the tantras of the Mahāyoga class. According to *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa*, *vratacaryā* is a very advanced practice which should only be carried out by a yogin who is indifferent to his own body and life and also has reached a determination that he now needs to perfect the result of his practice in this very life.[979] *Vratacaryā*, is referred to as a non-dual practice, and Āryadeva explains that it is impossible to get rid of the vestiges of beginningless defilements without this practice.[980] A practitioner who practices *vratacaryā* must also disregard the "eight worldly concerns" (*aṣṭalokadharma*), namely: gain (*lābha*), loss (*alābha*), fame (*yaśas*), obscurity (*ayaśas*), slander (*nindā*), praise (*praśaṃsā*), pleasure (*sukha*) and pain (*duḥkha*).[981]

In relation to *vratacaryā*, Āryadeva distinguishes between practices with elaboration,[982] without elaboration,[983] and completely without elaboration.[984] The latter category contains practices such as the observance of madness and the *bhusuku*-conduct (*bhusukucaryā*). The *bhusuku*-conduct refers to the fact that a yogin at this stage of practice, apart from eating (*bhu*), sleeping (*su*) and defecating (*ku*), only meditates on emptiness.[985]

Tibetan Explanations of "Disciplined Conduct"

The Tibetan masters and scholars who wrote about conduct and disciplined conduct[986] based their expositions upon Indian tantric texts such as *Hevajra Tantra*,[987] *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*,[988] *Guhyasiddhi*, *Guhyasamāja*,[989] *Sam-*

[978] *The Lamp that Integrates the Practices.*
[979] Wedemeyer (trans.) 2007: 277–278.
[980] Wedemeyer (trans.) 2007: 279–280.
[981] Wedemeyer (trans.) 2007: 281.
[982] *Prapañcacaryā, spros bcas.*
[983] *Niṣprapañcacaryā, spros med.*
[984] *Atyantaniṣprapañcacaryā, shin tu spros med.* These three types of practices are described in detail in Āryadeva's work. See Wedemeyer (trans.) 2007: 277–332.
[985] Bentor 2001: 335, Wedemeyer (trans.) 2007: 323.
[986] *Caryā, spyod pa*/*vratacaryā, brtul zhugs spyod pa.*
[987] For English translations, see Snellgrove 1959; Farrow and Menon 1992.
[988] For English translations, see, for example, Gray 2007; Dawa-Samdup 1987; Tsuda 1974.
[989] *Esoteric Communion, gSang ba 'dus pa.*

puṭa,[990] *Sarvabuddhasamāyoga,*[991] *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa*[992] and so forth.[993] Despite relying heavily upon Indian tantras, they nevertheless developed and synthesized the Indian explanations in a uniquely Tibetan way. Although the Tibetan commentators belonged to different Buddhist traditions and lived in different time periods their presentations are remarkably similar, and they often use the same technical terms. There are some minor variations in their respective explanations, however, and it is therefore useful to compare them with one another.

Like the Indian texts upon which they based their explanations, the Tibetans attempt to situate the transgressive, and at times, seemingly mad forms of conduct described in the Indian tantric texts within a "normative" Buddhist context. They point out that these types of conduct should only be carried out by tantric practitioners who have reached a stable meditative concentration by means of much prior practice in the generation and completion phases of tantric sādhana meditation, and they all emphasize that much prior training in non-tantric (sūtric) Buddhism is a necessary foundation for tantric practice.

One of several key terms they use is "disciplined conduct with a consort" (*vidyāvrata, rig pa'i brtul zhugs*),[994] which lCe sgom Shes rab rdo rje (lCe sgom, ca. 1140/50–1220) describes as a type of post-meditation practice (*rjes thob*) that should be carried out only by practitioners who have attained inner experience.[995] According to lCe sgom "disciplined conduct with a consort" is done for the sake of enhancing a meditative experience and there are three ways of performing this post-meditation practice.[996] Like Āryadeva, he distinguishes between practices with, without, and completely without elaboration, and it is the characteristics of the practitioner that determine how this practice should be carried out.[997] As a result of the practice, the practitioner

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990 For a Study of the first chapter, see Skorupski 1996.

991 *Equalizing Buddhahood, Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor.*

992 For an English translation, see Wedemeyer 2007.

993 'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas makes an interesting enumeration of the Indian sources for *vratacaryā* and other similar practices (2002: 936).

994 This term is also hard to translate. For example, Bentor translates it as "taming the engagement of awareness" (Bentor 2001: 335) and Davidson translates it as "discipline with a consort" (Davidson 2002: 326). How one chooses to translate the term has to do with whether one understands *vidyā (rig pa)* as meaning "awareness" or "consort". The explanatory texts of this practice make the latter option plausible. It should, however, be kept in mind that the practice referred to encompasses a wider series of activities besides sexual activity with a consort. So it is probably intentional that an ambiguous term is used for the practice.

995 This information is taken from the chapter about the practice of the mantra path from lCe sgom's *Man ngag rin chen spungs pa'i dkar chag (The Outline of the Jewel Mound of Instructions*, lCe sgom rdzong pa pa 1971) which is translated in Bentor 2001: 337–346. Bentor translates this term as "taming the engagement of awareness" (Bentor 2001: 335). For more information about lCe sgom, see Sørensen 1999.

996 lCe sgom cited in Bentor 2001: 343–344.

997 These practices were referred to above, and are described in Bentor 2001: 335 and also in Kongtrul 2005: 490, n. 39. For a more detailed description of the practices in Tibetan, see

reaches a very stable meditative experience, and according to lCe sgom this experience is secured by the so-called "practice of the crazy yogin" (*mgon po kun tu spyod pa*),[998] which he explained as follows:

> They practice such a practice at the appropriate time regardless of hope and fear even with regard to whatever is dharma and not dharma, without affirming or negating, and without accepting or rejecting anything. Hence, when they simply abide unceasingly in the actuality of the realization of the equanimity of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, free of dualistic grasping, without meditation and postmeditation, that is called "practicing the great meditative equipoise." It was taught that the culmination of that experience gives rise to the path of seeing [*mthong lam*].[999]

'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mthas yas (Kong sprul, 1813–1899) describes disciplined conduct in great detail in the ninth chapter of his work *Treasury of All-Encompassing Knowledge.*[1000] Under the heading "the section [which provides a] distinctive definition of the conduct [which is conducive to] progress on the branches of the path,"[1001] he outlines the various types of conduct which are recommended in tantric literature to test and enhance the realization of the advanced practitioner.[1002]

Like lCe sgom and the Indian tantric texts which he closely follows, Kong sprul emphasizes that disciplined conduct should only be practised at an advanced point of the tantric path. Kong sprul uses many different terms for disciplined conduct, some more general such as "conduct" (*spyod pa*), "disciplined conduct" (*brtul zhugs spyod pa*) and "mantric conduct" (*sngags kyi spyod pa*); and some more specific such as "conduct that makes everyone tremble" (*kun 'dar gyi spyod pa*), "totally good conduct" (*kun tu bzang po'i spyod pa*) and "completely victorious conduct" (*phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi spyod pa*). It is rather difficult to differentiate between these many terms; sometimes the terms seem interchangeable, and at other times they clearly refer to different types of conduct.

'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas 2002: 945–949. According to bKra shis rnam rgyal these three practices derive from the "father tantras" (*pha rgyu*), (bKra shis rnam rgyal 1974: 621).

[998] lCe sgom, cited in Bentor 2001: 335. *mGon po kun tu spyod pa* (**nāthasamudācāra*) is another term which is difficult to translate. Davidson translates it more literally as "lordly conduct" (Davidson 2002: 327).

[999] lCe sgom, translated in Bentor, 2001: 345. lCe sgom rdzong pa pa 1971: 123: *chos dang chos ma yin pa gang la yang re dogs kyi ltos pa med cing / kun la dgag sgrub blang dor med cing spyod pa de lta bu dus ci rigs su spyad pas / gnyid 'dzin thams can [cad] bral nas mnyam rjes med par 'khor 'das / mnyam pa nyid du rtogs pa'i don la rgyun chad med par gnas tsam na mnyam gzhag chen po'i spyod pa zhes bya ste / de'i mthar mthong lam skye par gsungs so /.*

[1000] *Shes bya kun khyab mdzod.*

[1001] *Lam gyi yan lag bogs 'don spyod pa rnam par gzhag pa'i skabs.*

[1002] 'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas 2002: 935–952. Stearns summarizes the contents of this section in *King of the Empty Plain* (Stearns 2007: 59–62). In the following summary I have relied upon Stearns's reading of Kong sprul's text.

Kong sprul outlines three main categories of conduct that should be carried out in succession, for certain periods of time, and for specific purposes.[1003] As mentioned above, he moreover states that the practitioner who engages in these practices must have obtained a certain level of spiritual realization before attempting them. The term used to describe the experience that entitles the practitioner to "enter into the conduct" is "warmth" (*drod*).[1004] Stearns explains that this term refers to "a foretaste of attainments, in the sense that warmth is the initial sign that appears before fire."[1005] "Warmth" is the first of four levels of the so-called "path of connection" (*sbyor lam*),[1006] which is the second of the five paths (*pañcamārga, lam lnga*) in Mahāyāna Buddhism.[1007] It is furthermore necessary that a person who practises disciplined conduct have no selfish motivation, but be solely motivated by compassion towards all sentient beings.

The first stage of "disciplined conduct" is called either "conduct that makes everyone tremble" (*kun 'dar kyi spyod pa*), which translates Sanskrit *avadhūtacaryā*.[1008] This type of disciplined conduct is also sometimes called "sinful conduct" (*sdig pa spyod pa*), or "non-dual [conduct]" (*gnyis spang*).[1009] According to Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1374–1432), other synonymous terms for this practice are "practising the observance of madness" (*smyon pa'i brtul zhugs kyi spyod pa*), the "conduct of a young prince" (*rgyal bu gzhon nu'i spyod pa*) and "secret conduct" (*gsang spyod*).[1010] Also sDe gzhung rin po che uses the term "secret conduct" (*gsang ba'i spyod pa*) for the first stage of disciplined conduct, and according to him the purpose of the practices is to go beyond the eight worldly concerns.[1011] The first phase of this practice should be done in secret (i.e. at night) while the latter phase of the practice should be done in disguise (i.e. while pretending to be crazy).

1003 For an English summary of this practice, see Kong sprul 2005: 490, n. 39; Stearns 2007: 60–61.

1004 See, for example, Kong sprul 2002: 939; bKra shis rnam rgyal 1974: 620; Grags pa rgyal mtshan 1968: 48.1.

1005 Stearns 2007: 60.

1006 The four levels of the path of connection are: (1) "warmth" (*drod*), (2) "peak" (*rtse mo*), (3) "forbearance" (*bzod pa*), and (4) "supreme dharma" (*chos mchog*).

1007 The five paths are a standard technical description of the path to enlightenment: (1) "the path of accumulation" (*tshogs lam, sambhāramārga*), (2) "the path of connection" (*sbyor lam, prayogamārga*), (3) "the path of seeing" (*mthong lam, darśanamārga*), (4) "the path of meditation (*sgom lam, bhāvanāmārga*), and (5) "the path of no more learning" (*mi slob pa'i lam, aśaikṣamārga*).

1008 The Tibetans often writes the Sanskrit word in a corrupt form, as *avadhūticaryā* or *avadhūtīcaryā*. It should be *avadhūtacaryā*. *Avadhūta* means "shaken off", "rejected" etc. The term is sometimes used for an ascetic who has renounced all all worldly attachments and connections. *Avadhūtacaryā* is thus the name for the conduct of such an ascetic.

1009 These different terms sometimes seem to indicate various phases and/or aspects of the practices performed during the first stage of disciplined conduct.

1010 Grags pa rgyal mtshan 1968: 48.4.

1011 sDe gzhung, cited in Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 18, n. 42. The eight worldy dharmas/concerns are enumerated above (p. 71, n. 334; and p 195).

Grags pa rgyal mtshan states that the "conduct that makes everyone tremble" should be carried out when the "lesser warmth" (*drod chung*) has been obtained, and he moreover mentions that the practice should be done in secret until the "middle warmth" (*drod 'bring*) is obtained. At that point the "conduct that makes everyone tremble" should be performed in public, and when the "great warmth" (*drod chen po*) is obtained the practitioner should start to practise the next stage of disciplined conduct, to which we will return below.[1012] The purpose of the first stage of disciplined conduct is to purify negative karma, destroy dualistic grasping, and expel conceptual notions and clinging to things as truly existent. If the initial practice indicates that the practitioner's meditative realization is unstable, he or she should concentrate upon his or her meditation and not continue until stability in meditation is obtained. If the practitioner's meditative realization is stable, on the other hand, the practitioner continues practising for a month and then starts to perform the *avadhūta* conduct in public.[1013] At this point the practitioner should

> publicly pretend to be a crazy person, a fool or another type of despised individual. Together with a consort or ḍākinīs, the practitioner does various kinds of unpredictable acts, such as singing, dancing, babbling, scolding, playing, laughing, running and leaping about in public, and engaging in prohibited sexual activities.[1014]

While engaging in all these outrageous and seemingly crazy activities the practitioner must keep his mind focused in meditation at all times, since the sole purpose of the conduct is to further meditative concentration. Stearns mentions that "overt religious acts that might be recognized by other practitioners and reveal the nature of what is really going on are not done at this time."[1015]

The second stage of "disciplined conduct" is called "totally good conduct" (*kun tu bzang po'i spyod pa*) by Kong sprul and "manifested conduct" (*mngon par spyod pa*) by sDe gzhung.[1016] Whatever action, whether good or bad, that one performs at this point is always perfect, and the conduct is performed openly. The "totally good conduct" consists of bringing others to the right path by means of displaying miraculous powers and performing yogic gazes and so forth.[1017] According to sDe gzhung it is at this point that the

[1012] Grags pa rgyal mtshan 1968: 48.1.
[1013] 'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas 2002: 944.
[1014] Stearns 2007: 61. Compare with 'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas 2002: 944.
[1015] Stearns 2007: 61.
[1016] 'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas 2002: 936, 944, sDe gzhung, cited in Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 18, n. 42. Kong sprul also uses the term *kun bzang 'jig rten mgnon du spyad* in reference to this phase of the practice ('Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas 2002: 943).
[1017] 'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas 2002: 944.

yogin should stay in cemeteries, take up the skull-cup and the khaṭvāṅga, and perform strange behavior such as lying to people.[1018]

The third stage of "disciplined conduct" is called the "completely victorious conduct" (*phyogs las rnam rgyal*) and at this point the practitioner has achieved victory over the afflictions (*nyon mongs, kleśa*), the four māras (*bdud bzhi*) have been subdued, and the obscuration of knowledge (*shes bya'i sgrib pa*) has been destroyed. According to the Ninth Karmapa (*Karma pa, dbang phyug rdo rje*, 1556–1603), practitioners with the highest capacity adopt the costume of a heruka when they have reached this stage and deliberately enter into fearsome circumstances with no thoughts whatsoever of what is to be eaten or not, what is clean or dirty, or what is faulty or correct. By means of this practice the yogin gains victory over demonic impulses of māra, delusions and Hinayāna motivations. Thus it is called the "completely victorious conduct".[1019]

bKra shis rnam rgyal (1512/13–1587) makes a similar three-fold division of conduct in his work *Mahāmudrā—The Moonlight*, but he also describes other ways of classifying these practices.[1020] He moreover points out that monks are only allowed to carry out these practices as long as their vow of celibacy remains unaffected.[1021]

According to bKra shis rnam rgyal there are five kinds of conduct that are to be performed by a practitioner who is carrying out these practices: "the conduct that resembles a wounded deer" (*ri dwags smas ma lta bu'i spyod pa*), "the conduct that resembles a lion" (*seng ge lta bu'i spyod pa*), "the conduct that resembles wind blowing through space" (*bar snang gi rlung lta bu'i spyod pa*), "the conduct that resembles the sky" (*nam mkha' lta bu'i spyod pa*), and finally "the conduct that resembles a madman" (*smyon pa lta bu'i spyod pa*).[1022] Although several of these five ways of conduct are relevant to the mad yogins of Tibet, the last one is of particular interest. bKra shis rnam rgyal explains "the conduct that resembles a madman" as follows: "A mad person lacks any objective direction. Thus a meditator should not have any attachment to anything, such as affirmation or rejection, acceptance or abandonment."[1023] These practices are also mentioned by rTse le sna

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[1018] sDe gzhung, cited in Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 18, n. 42.

[1019] Karmapa, Ninth 1989: 101.

[1020] *Phyag chen zla ba'i 'od zer*. bKra shis rnam rgyal 1974: 622. For an English translation, see Namgyal 2006: 337. Lhalungpa's English translation (Namgyal 2006) is generally not that useful when this topic is examined however, mainly because of the many specific technical terms which are difficult to translate. The full Tibetan title of the text is *Nges don phyag rgya chen po'i sgom rim gsal bar byed pa'i legs bshad zla ba'i 'od zer*. See Bibliography for details.

[1021] bKra shis rnam rgyal 1974: 623. For an English translation, see Namgyal 2006: 338.

[1022] bKra shis rnam rgyal 1974: 625–626. For an English translation, see Namgyal 2006: 339–340.

[1023] Namgyal 2006: 340; bKra shis rnam rgyal 1974: 626: *smyon pa'i sems la gang gi yang gza' gtad med pa ltar / legs nyes ci la'ng 'gag sgrub dang blang dor sogs kyi zhen pa med pa'o /.*

tshogs rang grol (b. 1608) who describes them as the essential key points of the different types of conduct that are mentioned in the authoritative scriptures and oral instructions.[1024] Concerning the conduct of a madman, rTse le sna tshogs rang grol has the following to say: "Do not become involved in the fetters of accepting or rejecting the eight worldly concerns; that is the conduct of a madman."[1025]

In the Aural Transmission of Thang stong rgyal po (*Thang stong snyan rgyud*) there is a somewhat similar section attributed to the great female disciple of Pha dam pa sangs rgyas, Ma gcig lab sgron (1055–1153), who after having described the secret practice (*gsang spyod*) is asked the following question by her son: "Having reached the root of the mind, how should one conduct one's practice?"[1026] Ma gcig answers:

> Having the conduct of a small child would be good.
> Having the conduct of a madman would be good.
> Having the conduct of a leper would be good.
> Having the conduct of a wild animal would be good.[1027]

These examples from Tibetan masters who lived both before, during and after gTsang smyon clearly show that a great deal of authoritative scriptures and commentaries were available to support gTsang smyon's unconventional behavior. Tibetan and Indian texts sometimes advocated that these kinds of conduct could and should be carried out to progress more quickly on the path. For a practitioner who had reached the second of the five paths, the "path of connection", disciplined conduct and other related kinds of conduct made it possible to progress rapidly towards the next step on their path towards awakening, namely the "path of seeing". For example, bKra shis rnam rgyal maintains that progress can be achieved more rapidly during a single month of secret conduct under terrifying conditions, in rough terrain and in the abode of harmful forces, than by meditating for a period of three years in towns and monasteries.[1028]

Many of the key terms, texts and practices that are used for, or in association with a seemingly mad and transgressive behavior in Tantric Buddhism were also used by gTsang smyon's disciples when they wrote the *rnam thars* about their guru. The most central term encountered is "disciplined conduct" (*brtul zhugs spyod pa*), but the term "equalisation of taste" (*ro snyoms*) is also often encountered. A third term that is frequently used in the life stories about gTsang smyon is "trampling upon" (*thog rdzis*). The literal meaning of

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[1024] Rangdröl, Tsele Natsog 1989: 58.
[1025] Rangdröl, Tsele Natsog 1989: 58.
[1026] Thang stong rgyal po 1972 53: *rtsa ba rang sems la gtugs nas nyams su len pa la spyod pa ji ltar byas na.*
[1027] Thang stong rgyal po 1972: 53: *bu chung gi spyod pa byas na bde / smyon pa'i spyod pa byas na bde / mdze can gyi spyod pa byas na bde / ri dwags kyi spyod pa byas na bde /.*
[1028] bKra shis rnam rgyal 1974: 624. English translation in Namgyal 2006: 338.

the term is trampling/stamping (*rdzis*) upon (*thog*), and it is used alone, in compounds, or together with other words. The term is often found together with an object and the locative particle *la* in phrases such as "trample on fear" (*nyams nga la thog rdzis*),[1029] "trampling upon all good and bad circumstances" (*rkyen bzang ngan thams cad la thog rdzis*)[1030] and "trample upon all appearances" (*snang ba thams cad la thog rdzis*).[1031] The terms "conduct" (*spyod pa*), "disciplined conduct" (*brtul zhugs spyod pa*), "equalization of taste" (*ro snyoms*), and "trampling upon" (*thog rdzis*) are thus central terms used in the *rnam thars* about gTsang smyon when his seemingly mad behavior is described, and they are often found together, either as compounds or as related words referring to similar behavior.

As we have seen, madness and other forms of unconventional behavior are an accepted and even prescribed part of advanced tantric practice. Since all the Tibetan Buddhist traditions accept the tantras, they all include these practices, at least in theory. However, according to the exegetical literature, these types of practices could be hazardous for the practitioner if s/he is not properly prepared for them. They could also be misused by charlatans who deceive people and practise with the wrong motivation. lCe sgom pa mentions that it is important that these forms of practice only be carried out by practitioners who have attained the proper inner realization:

> If those Mantra practices are not performed in accordance with the timing of the practice, if the beginner performs the taming of engagement of awareness or the "practice of the crazy yogin," that will later become a cause for a lower rebirth. Therefore it is very important to perform in accordance with the timing of the practice.[1032]

lCe sgom pa was not alone in warning practitioners not to engage in this type of practice without being properly prepared. The bKa' brgyud scholar bKra shis rnam rgyal similarly points out that a practitioner should not enter into the conduct (*spyod pa la 'jug pa*) at the wrong time, namely before s/he has experienced "inner heat" (*drod*) as a sign of realization.[1033] He moreover states that there are some people who embark upon these practices and wander about at crossroads and charnel grounds just to become famous.[1034] They have thus totally misunderstood the purpose of these practices, namely to

[1029] See, for example, G: 25.
[1030] See, for example, G: 24, T: 41.
[1031] See, for example, L: 48.
[1032] lCe sgom cited in Bentor 2001: 346. lCe sgom rdzong pa pa 1971: 125: *gal te gsang sngags kyi spyod pa de dag dus tshod dang ma 'brel par / las dang po pas rig pa brtul zhugs kyi spyod pa'am / mgon po kun tu spyod pa byas na / slar ngan song gi rgyu byed pas / des na spyod pa dus tshod dang 'brel bar gal che'o /.*
[1033] bKra shis rnam rgyal 1974: 620; English translation in Namgyal 2006: 336.
[1034] bKra shis rnam rgyal 1974: 621; Namgyal 2006: 336–337.
[1034] *Lam mchog rin po che'i phreng ba.*

understand that "all the stability and movements of one's mind are of equal taste in the essence of dharmatā."[1035]

But how can one know if a person who acts like a siddha is a genuine siddha or a charlatan? In his text *Precious Garland of the Sublime Path,*[1036] sGam po pa (1079–1153) points out that "it is possible to mistake a maniac for someone whose delusion has collapsed."[1037] sGam po pa also states that "it is possible to mistake a charlatan for a siddha."[1038] A more recent master, dPal sprul rin po che (b. 1808) similarly advises those who are trying to find a genuine Buddhist teacher to beware of "mad guides" (*smyon pa'i lam mkhan*), who "ape the siddhas and behave as if their actions were higher than the sky" and "lead anyone who follows them down wrong paths."[1039] A few pages later in the same text, dPal sprul rin po che states that a master should not be judged by his outer appearance since "most of India's siddhas lived as common evil-doers, base outcastes, more degenerate than the lowest of the low."[1040]

If realized masters are likely to behave like evil-doers and outcasts, how then can an ordinary being know if a person is a genuine siddha, a charlatan, or perhaps a person who is pathologically mad? This problem is built into Tantric Buddhism and the Tibetans have struggled with it ever since Buddhism was brought to the Tibetan plateau.[1041]

gTsang smyon's Opinion about "Disciplined Conduct"

Let us now turn to the answer gTsang smyon gave to mDzad khram pa's question that was cited at the very beginning of this chapter. The question concerned what experiences and qualities a practitioner must have before being allowed to use the heruka garments. According to rGod tshang ras pa, gTsang smyon began his answer by emphasizing that a person who wanted

[1035] bKra shis rnam rgyal 1974: 621: *yid brtan pa dang g.yo ba thams cad chos nyid kyi ngo bor ro mnyam pa*; For an alternative English translation, see Namgyal 2006: 337.
[1036] *Lam mchog rin po che'i phreng ba.*
[1037] Gampopa 1995: 33; sGam po pa 2000: 65: *'khrul zhig dang bdud khyer la nor sa yod.*
[1038] Gampopa 1995: 33; sGam po pa 2000: 65: *grub thob dang zog po la nor sa yod.*
[1039] Patrul Rinpoche 1994: 140; dPal sprul Rin po che 2004: 215: *grub pa'i mdzad spyod ltar byed pas kun spyod gnam du gshegs pa; lam log par 'khrid.*
[1040] Patrul Rinpoche 1994: 146; dPal sprul Rin po che 2004: 226: *'phags pa'i yul gyi dbang phyug phal mo che / / gdol pa g.yung po sdig spyod phal pa'i tshul / / nyams pa las kyang shin tu nyams par yod / /.*
[1041] There are many examples of this; the most well-known example is probably the misuse of tantric practices that, according to Tibetan historical records, occurred after the first spread of the doctrine. During that period Buddhism degenerated and some tantric practitioners misused the tantric teachings and performed tantric rituals and practices in a literal manner (see, for example, Tucci 1980: 16–17). Atiśa was then invited to Tibet and actively promoted a more gradual path, emphasizing that the tantras should only be practiced by practitioners who possess the proper foundation, and it was also emphasized that the tantric teachings should not be performed in a literal way.

to dress and act as a heruka had to turn away from samsara and the sufferings of the lower realms.[1042] Then the yogin must enter into the door of the Buddhist doctrine and completely give up the eight worldly concerns. With such a foundation the individual should have undergone training in both the individual liberation (*so sor thar pa*, *prātimokṣa*) and the bodhisattva disciplines. gTsang smyon specifically states that the vows of these two disciplines must not have been transgressed. In other words, a practitioner who wants to embark on the "heruka path" must have undergone much prior training in the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna vehicles. Having this foundation, the yogin must obtain tantric empowerments and instructions from an excellent guru/lama. The candidate must, moreover realize both the words and the meaning of the tantric teachings and practices. Not only that, the yogin must have attained experience and realization as a result of his or her practice. Only at this point may a practitioner, who thus has reached the time for conduct (*spyod la'i dus la bab pa cig*), start to wear the heruka garments. If the time for conduct truly has arrived, the practitioner should start with the "totally good conduct" when residing on the "path of accumulation" and then continue with the "secret conduct" when arriving at the "path of connection". Then at the "path of seeing" when the wind (*rlung*) and mind (*sems*) have entered the central channel (*dbu ma*) the practitioner will be able to display his/her higher perceptions (*mngon shes*, *abhijñā*) and powers (*nus pa*) outwardly and thereby influence those who lack faith, and also be able to bring all circumstances onto the path (*rkyen lam du slongs*). The practitioner may now perform the activities associated with the ritual feast of the consort observance (*rig pa brtul zhugs tshogs kyi spyod pa*).[1043]

gTsang smyon finally states that practitioners who have not attained all these powers, but who have never transgressed the sacred commitments (*dam tshig*, *samaya*) and vows (*sdom pa*, *saṃvara*) of the Secret Mantra tradition, and are able to control their afflictions (*kleśa*, *nyon mongs pa*) by applying appropriate antidotes inwardly, and benefit the teachings outwardly, are also allowed to wear the heruka implements.[1044]

It is noteworthy that gTsang smyon used many of the terms that were discussed above, and also that he was very careful to situate the practices associated with the heruka outfit within a wider Buddhist context. Not least did he emphasize that a person who embarks upon such practices must have a thorough background in non-tantric Buddhism, and that he or she must have kept his or her vows undamaged. He furthermore situates the specific conduct within the "five paths", and in a startlingly similar way to Kong sprul and other exegetes, he connects certain types of conduct with certain stages of the path.

[1042] I will paraphrase gTsang smyon's answer; compare my rendering with G: 230–231.
[1043] G: 230–231.
[1044] G: 231.

Chapter 9: The "School of gTsang smyon"

The main sources of this study were all written by gTsang smyon's direct disciples. However, in addition to the hagiographies about gTsang smyon, his disciples compiled and printed many other texts. These texts provide us with much additional information about gTsang smyon and his lineage. gTsang smyon also compiled and printed several texts himself. Moreover, there are texts about gTsang smyon's disciples, about disciples of these disciples, and also about gTsang smyon's main teacher. This chapter will provide an overview of gTsang smyon's own literary works, of the literary works about and by his disciples, and of other sources that shed light upon gTsang smyon and his tradition. Although this overview is far from exhaustive, it will provide us with supplementary information, alternative perspectives, and jumping-off points for further studies of gTsang smyon and his tradition.

The "School" or "Workshop" of gTsang smyon

In his survey of the printing activities of gTsang smyon and his disciples, Kurtis Schaeffer notes that gTsang smyon initiated a tradition of printing that was to continue for almost a century after his death.[1045] According to one of the life stories of gTsang smyon, it was an exhortion from Nāropa in a dream that inspired him to compile texts and make block-prints.[1046] His disciples disliked the idea of engaging in this very difficult enterprise and tried to persuade gTsang smyon to postpone it, but to no avail.[1047] At the time, many of these hagiographies and esoteric instructions only existed as manuscripts. gTsang smyon feared that the life stories and instructions might be lost and decided to compile and print them. The technology of wood-block printing that he used had only been in Tibet for about sixty years when gTsang smyon printed his first major works—the life story and song collection of Milarepa. He later wrote down and printed other texts, and his disciples followed in his track. gTsang smyon was thus a pivotal figure in Tibet's transi-

[1045] Schaeffer, forthcoming.

[1046] L: 96–97. Lha btsun's account of this episode is translated in Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 66–68; Quintman 2006: 198–199.

[1047] G: 148; L: 98; N: 16b. rGod tshang ras pa's account of thise episode is translated in Quintman 2006: 204; Lha btsun's account is translated in Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 69.

tion from a manuscript culture to a block-print culture. Franz-Karl Ehrhard has suggested that on the basis of stylistic criteria of the Buddhist printed texts one may identify individual "schools" or "workshops", and that these could then be named after the leading figures or religious communities with which the Buddhist artists and craftsmen affiliated themselves.[1048] One can thus speak of the "school of gTsang smyon" or the "workshop of gTsang smyon", which consisted of gTsang smyon, his disciples and other affiliated people. "The school of gTsang smyon" continued to produce texts long after gTsang smyon's death. Schaeffer has suggested that Sangs rgyas Dar po's work on the history of the bKa' brgyud tradition from 1568 may be a convenient place to draw a close to these activities.[1049] Gene Smith once stated that "gTsang smyon fostered a whole school of bKa' brgyud pa biographical works" and he supplied details for about twenty-two works published as wood-block-prints by gTsang smyon and his disciples.[1050] Since that time, mainly due to the efforts of the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project many more texts that were compiled and printed by gTsang smyon and his disciples have appeared. Schaeffer has identified approximately fifty-five prints from the same group of scholars and craftsmen, and since the NGMPP conducted further photographic expeditions for some two years after Schaeffer's investigation we may anticipate that new works belonging to "the school of gTsang smyon" will appear.[1051]

After the passing away of gTsang smyon, the activities of the "school of gTsang smyon" centered around rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun. These two masters resided in different parts of Tibet: Lha btsun in Brag dkar rta so, near sKyid grong; and rGod tshang ras pa in Ras chung phug, south of rTse thang. Both Brag dkar rta so and Ras chung phug became important centers of printing activities. That Lha btsun and rGod tshang ras pa were aware of each other's activities and cooperated is indicated by the fact that no duplicate works were published at both Brag dkar rta so and Ras chung phug.[1052]

Before looking at the life and works of these two central figures, let us turn to the literary works of their teacher, gTsang smyon.

[1048] Ehrhard, forthcoming b.
[1049] Schaeffer, forthcoming.
[1050] Smith 2001: 61.
[1051] Schaeffer, forthcoming.
[1052] Schaeffer, forthcoming.

gTsang smyon's Own Works

gTsang smyon was a prolific writer/compiler who authored some of Tibet's most famous and popular literary works. Milarepa's life story and song collection are his most important texts, at least in terms of popularity. But, beside these texts he wrote/compiled a life story of Milarepa's lama Marpa, and also compiled a collection of texts associated with the Aural Transmission (*snyan brgyud*) of the bKa' brgyud tradition. Although a description and analysis of gTsang smyon's own works is somewhat beyond the aims of the present study, a tentative overview and discussion of his works will enable us to get closer to gTsang smyon and see him from another angle. This section will survey and discuss the texts which gTsang smyon wrote/compiled/printed, in other words texts that he was personally involved in making, with a special emphasis on his famous works on Milarepa.[1053]

The Life and Songs of Milarepa

gTsang smyon completed his life story about Milarepa 1488 in La phyi.[1054] Alongside this he printed Milarepa's collection of songs. The life story was given the title the *Life of the Great Powerful Lord of Yogins rJe btsun Milarepa, which Teaches the Path of Liberation and Omniscience*[1055] and the song collection was given the title the *Collected Songs which Expand on the Life of rJe btsun Milarepa.*[1056] Andrew Quintman notes that no copy of gTsang smyon's original block-print has yet appeared. But two manuscripts that are preserved in the archives of the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project in Kathmandu seem to have been copied from this first printing.[1057] The original printing blocks that had been made under gTsang smyon's supervision were eventually worn out, and new ones had to be made. Lha btsun organized a new carving of the life story at Brag dkar rta so and he also oversaw the production of a new edition of the collection of songs.[1058] Gene Smith has listed the many editions of Milarepa's life story

[1053] It should be noted that it is often difficult to determine the authorship of Tibetan texts. This is exemplified in most of the sources of this study. For example, all the three *rnam thars* about gTsang smyon, which were described in Chapter 2, include sections that might contain gTsang smyon's own words.

[1054] As mentioned, the life stories about gTsang smyon give other information concerning the dating of this text.

[1055] *rNal 'byor gyi dbang phyug chen po rje btsun mi la ras pa'i rnam thar thar pa dang thams cad mkhyen pa'i lam ston.*

[1056] *rJe btsun mi la ras pa'i rnam thar rgyas par phye ba mgur 'bum.*

[1057] Quintman 2006: 205, n. 38. gTsang smyon's own printer colophon in these manuscripts is presented in Quintman 2006: 408–411.

[1058] The Brag dkar rta so edition of the life story is 115 folios long, and the song collection 250 folios long; both are preserved by the NGMPP (described by Schaeffer, forthcoming). de Jong used the Brag dkar rta so edition as one of his sources when he made his critical edition of the *rnam thar* of Milarepa (de Jong 1959).

and song collection that followed this second edition and the list is a distinct proof of the success of gTsang smyon's versions.[1059] The triumph of gTsang smyon's two works on Milarepa is indeed remarkable. Especially the life story but also the collected songs became accepted by everyone. All the religious traditions used it, the learned as well as the illiterate were familiar with, and had faith in it, monks and lay alike studied and venerated it, and so did men and women, young and old.[1060] It is hard to find any other Tibetan text that has gained such popularity and acceptance. Its great status has made it comparable to the canonical scriptures of Tibet.

Not only Tibetans have discovered the life story and song collection of Milarepa, however, but their popularity is almost universal. Many scholars have acknowledged that this particular version of Milarepa's life story and song collection stands apart from other hagiographies and collection of songs. Giuseppe Tucci, who generally found *rnam thars* to be boring and tedious, remarked that the life story of Milarepa in contrast was one of few "noble masterpieces breathing a fresh, serene and robust poetic spirit."[1061] Also R. A. Stein remarked that the *rnam thars* of Milarepa and Marpa that gTsang smyon authored are "distinguished from many other, quite boring and pedantic, works by their near, colloquial language, their lively style, and above all the interest they take in countless details of real life." Stein moreover states that "it is just this communion of the 'mad' saints with popular sources of inspiration that made them the greatest creators of Tibetan literature."[1062] Gene Smith once remarked that gTsang smyon's "biography (*rnam thar*) and collected poems (*mgur 'bum*) of Mi la ras pa are among the great masterpieces of Tibetan and world literature."[1063] Stanley Tambiah, similarly, suggests that the biography of Milarepa and the biography of the Thai forest-monk Acharn Mun could be considered the "flowers of the Buddhist hagiological tradition."[1064]

These are only a few examples of the praise that the hagiography and song collection that gTsang smyon composed has received. The most compelling evidence of their popularity in Tibet and elsewhere is not words of

[1059] Smith 2001: 70–73. Andrew Quintman is preparing an updated list of editions that currently has at least nineteen unique editions (Quintman personal communication, November 2008).
[1060] It is interesting to note that gTsang smyon skilfully promulgated his version of the life story by laying out biographical scroll paintings (*thang kha*) following his version. These visual narratives expanded his audience to include non-literate communities and they helped to promote his version of the life story and make it the standard version of Milarepa's life story (G: 147, 158, 161; Quintman 2006: 207–208).
[1061] Tucci 1949: 151.
[1062] Stein 1972: 276.
[1063] Smith 2001: 61.
[1064] Tambiah 1984: 128.

praise, however, but the many translations and editions that have been made of the texts.[1065]

Since how gTsang smyon composed the life of Milarepa has been described in great detail by both Stearns [Kalnins] and Quintman,[1066] I will not expand on it here, but instead turn to another question that could also be asked: Is it Milarepa or gTsang smyon who talks to us in the famous life story? If one compares older versions of Milarepa's life story with the version that gTsang smyon composed one discovers several differences.[1067] These innovations contributed to the popularity of gTsang smyon's versions of both the hagiography and the song collection. They might also give us information about gTsang smyon himself and about the time period during which he lived. Quintman points out that "the contemporary study of autobiography has become increasingly aware of an autobiographical presence within biographical literature."[1068] He also notes that "the writing of biography is to some degree a self-reflexive process through which the author defines the subject in terms of his own position."[1069]

One important innovation that gTsang smyon contributed was to transform the third-person narrative into a first person account. Quintman notes that "as an ostensibly autobiographical narrative, the story of Mi la ras pa's life garnered an immediacy that masked nearly four centuries of repetition and revision."[1070] It should be noticed that this innovation probably contributed a great deal to the eventual success of gTsang smyon's version. By letting Milarepa tell the story to Ras chung pa, gTsang smyon's biography became an autobiography. This rhetorical move gives more weight to the story, and it conveys the impression that the reader/listener is in direct contact with Milarepa's own words. The life story starts with the words, "Thus did I hear, one time."[1071] This is the traditional beginning of a Buddhist sūtra, and as Donald Lopez explains, this beginning gives a clear signal to the reader/listener: "By using these famous words to open his text, the author signals to the reader that they are about to hear the teaching of a buddha, and that the rapporteur of the teaching, in this case, Rechung [Ras chung], speaks with the authority of a witness."[1072]

[1065] It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to mention all the translations and editions that have appeared of these texts over the years, all over the world. For English translations of the life story, see Lhalungpa 1979; Evans-Wents 2000. The song collection has been translated into English by Garma C. C. Chang 1989.

[1066] Stearns [Kalnins] 1985, Quintman 2006.

[1067] These differences have been discussed in Roberts 2007: 57–60 and Quintman 2006: 209–241.

[1068] Quintman 2006: 249.

[1069] Quintman 2006: 250.

[1070] Quintman 2006: 216.

[1071] gTsang smyon 1979: 6: *'di skad bdag gis thos pa dus gcig na.*

[1072] Lopez 2000: J.

Another important innovation was to separate the songs from the life story. This made the life story easier to read/listen to. The songs became a commentary to the life story of which those who wanted to know more could avail themselves, while the general reader could read the dramatic narrative without the many songs. This resulted in a much more accessible text that could be understood also by people without much prior knowledge of Buddhism.

gTsang smyon also shifted Milarepa's status from a miraculous emanation to that of an ordinary human. Quintman notes that "gTsang smyon was the first—and perhaps the only—author to categorically deny the yogin's status as a previously awakened buddha, contradicting numerous works in the biographical tradition including most of his principal sources."[1073] This change was important in several ways. It made Milarepa more human and thereby easier for the reader to identify with. It also proved that an ordinary human being—even a sinner—could obtain complete liberation (*rnam thar*). Milarepa thus became a living example who proves the efficacy of the Secret Mantra methods. In gTsang smyon's life story of Milarepa there is a section that describes how rNgan rdzong asks Milarepa if he is the incarnation of a buddha or a bodhisattva. Milarepa replies that "It is possible for every ordinary man to persevere as I have done. To consider a man of such perseverance as the reincarnation of a Buddha or as a Bodhisattva is a sign of not believing in the short path."[1074]

To present Milarepa as an ordinary being might also be seen as an indirect critique of the system of reincarnation that had become increasingly important during gTsang smyon's lifetime. In some ways gTsang smyon's version of the life story thus mirrors the times in which it was written. This is of course logical, and there are further examples of it in the life story.

Another theme that seems at least partly to reflect the time when gTsang smyon lived, rather than when Milarepa lived, is the constant criticism against monk-scholars that is found in gTsang smyon's version of the life story and song collection. This critique is also found in older versions, but gTsang smyon adapted it to his times and sometimes deliberately portrayed learned monks and *dge bshes* as the "bad guys" of the story. Although rudimentary versions of some of these stories and songs are also found in older versions, there are some examples showing that gTsang smyon sometimes changed older versions. The most poignant and pronounced example is probably the last chapter of the *rnam thar* in which the *bon* priest who in earlier versions poisons Milarepa becomes transformed into a jealous *dge*

[1073] Quintman 2006: 221. Milarepa is described as an emanation in all the earlier sources according to Peter Alan Roberts (Roberts 2007: 78–80).
[1074] Lhalungpa 1979: 144–145; gTsang smyon 1979: 143–144: *snying rus nga'i 'di bas mi zhan pa so skye snying rus can kun la yong bar 'dug / byung tshe sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems dpa'i sprul par rlom pa 'dug ste / gsang sngags gyi nye lam la yid ma ches pa'i rtags yin pas /.*

bshes.[1075] There are also several songs that portray monk-scholars and *dge bshes* in negative ways in the collection of Milarepa's songs that gTsang smyon compiled.[1076]

To fully understand the reasons behind the polemics against monk-scholars we should consider the religious climate at the time when gTsang smyon compiled the *Life* and *Songs* of Milarepa. gTsang smyon and the other mad yogins represented an extreme position in a debate concerning how Buddhism should be practised. According to the mad yogins, a person who wanted to progress on the path to awakening should become a yogin and vigorously practise Tantric Buddhism in remote areas, and it did not matter much whether one was a learned monk or an illiterate lay person. Faith and diligence enabled anyone to practise Tantric Buddhism and obtain results. Intellectual learning was not necessarily anything negative, but it could be a fault if it led to pride and egotism. gTsang smyon was thus involved in polemics with some learned monks (*dge bshes*) of the recently founded dGe lugs pa tradition, but also with monk-scholars of other traditions. The dispute concerned how Buddhism should be practised, and especially when and how the more advanced tantric practices should be undertaken. gTsang smyon skillfully used Milarepa as a tool in this debate. By letting Milarepa say things that gTsang smyon himself believed in, his arguments became hard to refute.

Moreover it might be of interest to investigate if gTsang smyon purposely presented Milarepa as a mad yogin and thereby promoted the way of the mad yogins in Tibet. In his Ph.D. dissertation *The Hermeneutics of Madness: A Literary and Hermeneutical Analysis of the "Mi la'i rnam thar" by gTsang smyon Heruka*, Robert Everett Goss examines gTsang smyon's version of the life story of Milarepa and one of the main arguments of the dissertation is that "gTsang smyon composed the *rnam thar* with a reformist intent."[1077] Goss also asserts that gTsang smyon "portrayed the poet-saint Mi la as a mad saint to justify the mad saint movement (*smyon pa*) in Tibet."[1078] While I agree with Goss that gTsang smyon indeed seems to have had a specific intention when he composed the *rnam thar*,[1079] I feel more uncertain about

[1075] Quintman 2006: 202, n. 30. Quintman informed me that he has found a rare account of this incident by Zhi byed ri khrod pa, finished in 1373, that also describes the poisoner as a *dge bshes*. This shows that the anti-scholar theme existed in the biographical tradition even prior to gTsang smyon. Quintman is currently preparing an article about this account. (Quintman, personal communication, November 30, 2008).

[1076] See, for example, chapter 34, 42, 43 and 44 in Milarepa's *mgur 'bum*.

[1077] Goss 1993: abstract.

[1078] Goss 1993: abstract.

[1079] If all actions are preceded by intention, it is nevertheless difficult to determine such intention, or even to ascribe a single intention to any given act. The stated intention that gTsang smyon provides is that he wrote down the *rnam thar* of Milarepa to benefit the teachings and the beings (see Chapter 7). We may also assume that he had some more or less hidden and perhaps unconscious motivation when he composed the famous life story. These hidden inten-

his second argument. Compared with the *rnam thars* about gTsang smyon and other mad yogins, comparatively few really bizarre and mad actions are depicted in Milarepa's life story. Milarepa appears to have been a great ascetic, a great meditator and a great yogin, but not a mad yogin. Milarepa was indeed called mad in the song that began the dissertation. But that song merely uses madness as a metaphor for enlightenment.[1080] Although there are parallels between gTsang smyon and Milarepa there are also many differences. Milarepa seldom behaves in a mad way, and he is seldom called a mad yogin in the texts, including those composed by gTsang smyon. This is in sharp contrast to gTsang smyon and the other *smyon pas*.

There is one episode, however, in the *rnam thar* where Milarepa indeed acts in a quite bizarre way, and here gTsang smyon might have exaggerated his behavior so that Milarepa appeared to be a mad yogin rather than just a yogin.

On one occasion Milarepa's sister Peta visited her brother in his isolated mountain retreat. Milarepa's nakedness embarrassed Peta and upset her. She wept and said, "From whatever point of view one looks at my elder brother, one cannot call him a man. You should ask for alms and little by little eat the food that humans eat. I will give you what you need to make clothes."[1081] Later Peta returned with cloth that she had woven for Milarepa. While searching for her brother she met a lama who was dressed in silk and sat upon a high throne beneath a canopy. A great crowd offered him tea and beer. When she found her brother in sKyid phug she told him: "My elder brother's religion provides him with nothing to eat and nothing to wear. This is shameful and I will no longer stand for it. Make a loincloth from this material which I have woven."[1082] [...] While speaking she wept. Milarepa answered, "Do not speak like that. My nakedness and my unconventional behavior embarrass you. But I am content with this body of mine which enabled me to encounter religion. So I have nothing to be ashamed of. Since I was born naked, I have no cause for shame" [...].[1083]

tions do not necessarily contradict his "official" motivation to benefit the beings, however, since his "reformist intent" might be motivated by just that.

1080 It is also imprtant that the song was included in a song collection that was authored/compiled by gTsang smyon. His disciple, Lha btsun, also includes this song, but it is not yet known if the song of madness existed in older versions. The song of madness might thus be an example showing that gTsang smyon inserted the theme of madness into the tradition of Milarepa.

1081 Lhalungpa 1979: 125; gTsang smyon 1979: 124: *da a jo la gang nas bltas rung mi'i ming rang mi 'dug pas / bsod snyoms re mdzod la mi zas dum re gsol / ngas na bza' zhig ci 'byor byas la 'bul du yong zer /.*

1082 Lhalungpa 1979: 135; gTsang smyon 1979: 134: *a jo'i chos kha la bza' rgyu yang med / lus la gyon rgyu yang med pas khrel ngo tsha nas bud pa 'dis mi yong bar 'dug / da snam bu 'di la smad g.yogs gcig mdzod la.*

1083 Lhalungpa 1979: 135; gTsang smyon 1979: 134: *nges pe ta de skad ma zer cig / khyod dag nga gos med pa cha lugs lhug par gnas pa 'di la ngo tshar byed par 'dug ste nga'i 'di*

Milarepa then sang a song with instructions for his sister and after having heard the song, his sister handed over the cloth and said:

> "Make a loincloth from this material. I will return soon."
> I promised to stay there a few days. When my sister had gone to Dingri, I made a hood to cover my head and sewed a sleeve for each of my fingers and for my feet. Then I sewed a sheath for my sexual organ.
> My sister returned at the end of a few days and asked, "Brother have you sewn the cloth?"
> "I have."
> I put them on and I showed her the sheaths I had made for each of my extremities.
> She exclaimed, "Look at him! My brother has nothing human left in him! Not only is he completely without shame, but he has also ruined the cloth that I wove with such labor. Is it because he has no time to do anything but meditate, or is it because he has too much time?"[1084]

Although Milarepa tries to explain why he made the sheaths, and tells his sister that he made them since he considered each part of the body to be of equal worth, it is a bit hard to understand why a yogin who had no time to do anything other than meditate devotes time and energy to making sheaths for his limbs. This could perhaps be explained as some kind of teaching for his sister but in this particular scene Milarepa does indeed seem a bit mad, or at least he seems to have had a rather bizarre sense of humor. An older *rnam thar* does refer to this story in a general way, but Milarepa does not sew the individual garments, he just allows the cloth to disintegrate and continues to be naked.[1085] Here we thus see an example of how gTsang smyon perhaps gave a bizarre twist to the life story of Milarepa and thereby made Milarepa appear a bit mad. It would seem logical if Milarepa just ignored the clothes and continued with his meditation, but in gTsang smyon's version he makes sheaths of it. It is however important to note that Milarepa did not publicly act out in a seemingly crazy way as a kind of antinomian skilful means as gTsang smyon and the other mad yogins often did. The character of Mi-

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spyir yod pa rang gis 'tsheng ste chos dang mjal ba yin pas ngo mi tsha / khyad par a ma las skyes tsam nyid na yod pas ngo tsha rgyu med /.

1084 Lhalungpa 1979: 139; gTsang smyon 1979: 137–138: *snam bu 'di la smad g.yogs shig kyang 'tshem grogs mdzod cig nga myur du slebs yong ngo zer ba la / ngas zhag shes der sdod par khas blangs / sring mo ding ri phyogs la slong du song ba'i bar la ngas sring mo'i snam bu de la mgo kun 'thums pa'i zhwa gcig lag pa'i sor mo re re la shugs re / rkang pa la lham / 'doms kyi cha lugs la shubs shig bzos te bzhag / zhag 'ga' nas sring mo slebs byung ste / a jos snam bu ma btsems pa yin nam zer ba la / btsems yod byas shubs rnams yan lag rnams dang cha lugs la so sor bskon nas bstan pas / de a jo mi rung rang mi 'dug / ngo tsha mi shes pa'i steng du ngas dka' las byas pa'i snam bu de yang chud bzan 'dug / res 'ga' bsgrub pa mo gtogs gang yang byed long med pa 'dra ba zhig la / res 'ga' ci 'dra'i dal ba yang byung 'dug zer bas /.*

1085 The older *rnam thar* of Milarepa that is referred to is the *Bu chen bcu gnyis*. This was one of gTsang smyon's sources when he wrote his version. Thanks are due to Andrew Quintman who kindly gave me this information (e-mail correspondence spring 2007).

larepa's madness was thus entirely different from that of gTsang smyon and the other *smyon pas*. Finally, no one in the story considers Milarepa to be a mad yogin. Since his sister Peta later changes her mind about her brother and becomes a devoted cotton-clad yoginī (*ras pa*), the incident with the sheaths does afterall appear to be a teaching directed to his sister, and indeed to the reader of the story.

The theme of madness also sometimes appears in gTsang smyon's version of Milarepa's song collection. The Song of Madness to Dam pa sangs rgyas has already been mentioned, and is the most obvious example, but there are some more. For instance, in the chapter about the attack by and subsequent conversion of the Five Sisters of Long Life,[1086] Milarepa calls himself "a mad ascetic who knows not disgrace and shame."[1087] Milarepa, as portrayed by gTsang smyon, thus is occasionally presented as a mad yogin, but, these references are rather few and do not make him a mad yogin. Overall, "holy madness" is not a striking feature of Milarepa's hagiography and song collection, and Tibetans do not generally refer to Milarepa as a mad yogin. Milarepa is the perfect yogin and ascetic, but the perfect mad yogins and mad ascetics appeared later, and gTsang smyon was one of them.

Despite his own status as a mad yogin, and despite a few episodes such as those narrated above, it seem clear to me that gTsang smyon refrained from making Milarepa into a mad yogin. On the contrary, the innovations in his version of the life story made Milarepa less controversial and less problematic than he was in earlier texts. This being said, it should be admitted that even the minor elements of "madness"—which gTsang smyon in some cases perhaps allowed to remain, and in other instances probably wrote into the story—contributed in making it possible for the mad saints to refer to Milarepa when justifying their own "mad way" of practice. There might therefore be some point in Goss's assertion regarding the intention of gTsang smyon when composing the *rnam thar*. However, as noted, I do not believe that the general picture of Milarepa that gTsang smyon conveyed in the texts is that of a mad yogin. It is therefore, in my opinion, an overstatement to say with Goss that he "portrayed the poet-saint Mi la as a mad saint to justify the mad saint movement (*smyon pa*) in Tibet".[1088] gTsang smyon did not portray Milarepa as a mad yogin, but he inserted some subtle elements of madness into the story, it seems, and by so doing he managed to pave the way for the "real mad yogins" and justify their way of practising Buddhism. gTsang smyon, thus applied very refined and subtle methods to achieve his goal.

Before ending this section on gTsang smyon's famous Milarepa texts, some examples of how gTsang smyon downplayed the problematic and con-

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[1086] *Tshe ring mched lnga.*

[1087] Chang (trans.) 1989: 319; gTsang smyon 1991: 475–476: ***brtul zhugs spyod pa'i smyon pa zhig [...] ngo tsha mi shes [...].***

[1088] Goss 1993: abstract.

troversial sides of Milarepa will be given. In an unpublished article, Kristin Blancke has shown that older versions of Milarepa's life story often mention that the monk-scholars that Milarepa criticized belonged to the bKa' gdams pa tradition. gTsang smyon kept the anti-scholastic agenda but omitted the references to bKa' gdams pa, according to Blancke.[1089] Milarepa—as presented in his *rnam thar*—thus became less controversial. Since the founder of the four greater and eight lesser bKa' brgyud traditions, sGam po pa, was a bKa' gdams pa monk, the established bKa' brgyud traditions were a mixture of bKa' gdams pa's monasticism and Milarepa's esoteric yogic teachings. Atiśa and the bKa' gdams pa tradition had also been integrated into other traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, and Milarepa's life story probably would not have been accepted as widely as it was if the critique of them had remained.

gTsang smyon also made other changes in his version of the story. For example, he emphasized sGam po pa's primacy as Milarepa's foremost disciple.[1090] This was important because it enabled all the bKa' brgyud traditions that stemmed from sGam po pa to embrace gTsang smyon's version.[1091] Ilze Maruta Stearns [Kalnins] notes that a major factor contributing to the popularity of gTsang smyon's version was the acceptance and praise it received from the Seventh Karmapa, Chos grags rgya mtsho, who was one of the most important religious figures at the time and the head of the Karma bKa' brgyud tradition.[1092] If gTsang smyon had not presented sGam po pa as Milarepa's foremost disciple it would likely have been difficult for the Karmapa, and other religious dignitaries in the bKa' brgyud tradition to accept it. gTsang smyon thus downplayed the role of Ras chung pa to whom Milarepa told his life story according to his version of the text. He did this in spite of the fact that he had strong personal bonds to transmissions that stemmed from Ras chung pa.[1093] Ras chung pa is one of the key characters in both gTsang smyon's life story of Milarepa and of his song collection of Milarepa. But despite giving him so much room in his texts, gTsang smyon presented him as a rather controversial and problematic disciple who often disobeyed Milarepa.[1094]

Furthermore, gTsang smyon removed some sections of older Milarepa hagiographies that contained polemics against the gradual approach to enlightenment. This gradual approach had been accepted by the majority of Buddhists by the time of gTsang smyon, and the bKa' gdams pa*s* were in-

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[1089] Blancke, unpublished: 11.

[1090] Roberts 2007: 3. See also gTsang smyon's way of presenting sGam po pa, translated in Chang (trans.) 1989: 463–497.

[1091] Roberts 2000: introduction, pp. 8–9.

[1092] Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 76–77.

[1093] gTsang smyon also practised in a way that resembles Ras chung's way of practising rather than sGam po pa's. For example, both were lay tantric yogins and both emphasized the importance of the tantric practices.

[1094] See, for example, Roberts 2007: 149.

strumental in spreading this approach. The tantric path and the Mahāmudrā teachings that gTsang smyon's own lineage were focused upon often advocated a more direct path to enlightenment and thus were sometimes in opposition to the gradual path. Blancke has shown that gTsang smyon's version of Milarepa's *Life* and *Songs* contains passages where Milarepa advocates a gradual approach that corresponds better with the Mahāyāna sūtric approach of the bKa' gdams pa than with tantric practices that Milarepa taught according to older versions of his life story and songs.[1095] This is a further example of how gTsang smyon made subtle changes in the life story, thereby making it less controversial.

gTsang smyon belonged to a non-monastic lineage that lacked an institutional foundation. He followed closely in the foot steps of Milarepa and the bKa' brgyud forefathers, and actively promoted and emulated them. But at the same time he seemed aware of the fact that his works must be accepted by the monks and their institutions if he wanted to get his message across. Peter Alan Roberts has described how gTsang smyon has altered the text slightly in his version of the songs of Milarepa and thereby created interesting shifts in meaning. At one particular section of the texts gTsang smyon has made some small changes to an older version and the end result is that Milarepa says: "I am a yogin but *afterwards* there will *also* be many monks."[1096] Roberts comments upon these prophetic words and states that the fact that this declaration is made by Milarepa to his own non-monastic community intensifies its import. He moreover points out that "the passage is often quoted to demonstrate the legitimacy of the monastic Dakpo Kagyu [Dwags po bka' brgyud] lineage in spite of its yogin origins."[1097]

These examples show that gTsang smyon made many innovations in his texts. While some of the innovations concerned narrative technique, others concerned the content of the life story and songs. These innovations brought life to Milarepa's life story and to his songs and also contributed to gaining them acceptance.

Despite denying Milarepa's position as an emanation in his life story, gTsang smyon paradoxically became so intimately connected with Milarepa that he was regarded as Milarepa's emanation. gTsang smyon was generally evasive about his previous lives, but he sometimes made allusions and said enigmatic things that showed that he saw himself as Milarepa incarnate.[1098] Quintman notes that gTsang smyon's *rnam thar* of Milarepa "can be read, in part, as his own autobiography, an autobiographical biography, a life within

[1095] Blancke, unpublished: 20.

[1096] Roberts 2007: 217. Roberts's italics. gTsang smyon cited in Roberts 2007: 217: *kho bo rnal 'byor pa yin pa la rjes su rab tu byung ba mang po yang 'ong bar 'dug.*

[1097] Roberts 2007: 217.

[1098] For more on this, see Chapter 3. The statements and allusions of this kind that gTsang smyon made have been translated and analyzed at length by both Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 75–83 and Quintman 2006: 253–261.

a life."[1099] This was also part of the reason for the great success of his work. Because gTsang smyon so thoroughly identified himself with Milarepa that he "became Milarepa" his version became different from other versions and full of life. gTsang smyon believed that he was Milarepa, he meditated in the same caves as Milarepa, ate the same food, walked the same paths, smelled the same smells, and so forth. So when he transformed Milarepa's life story into an autobiography by making it a first person account it was more than a narrative technique; he expressed his heartfelt closeness with Milarepa and often "spoke" from his own experience.

The Life of Marpa

Around 1505, just two years before his death, gTsang smyon stayed in "Chu bar, the nirmāṇakāya palace, the supreme place where Lord Milarepa attained perfect, complete buddhahood"[1100] and there he printed a *rnam thar* and collection of songs (*mgur 'bum*) of Marpa, Milarepa's teacher, that he had composed.[1101] The *rnam thar* was given the name the *Life of Marpa the Translator which is Meaningful to Behold* and it was 75 folios long.[1102] Gene Smith's list of the different editions of this text shows that the *rnam thar* of Marpa also became popular and widely disseminated in Tibet.[1103] Vostrikov notes that this *rnam thar* "is extremely popular in Tibet and abroad."[1104]

The song collection has remained obscure and no translation of it has appeared. The Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project has a microfilm copy of it and the title is the *Collected Songs of Marpa the Translator*.[1105] The song collection is 40 folios long in the later edition that was printed by Lha btsun 1552 (?) at Brag dkar rta so.[1106]

Given the importance of Marpa's *rnam thar* it is peculiar that neither Lha btsun nor dNgos grub dpal 'bar cares to mention it in their *rnam thar*s about gTsang smyon. Only rGod tshang ras pa mentions it, and he does so in one

1099 Quintman 2006: 249.

1100 The Nālandā Translation Committee (trans.), 1986: 204; gTsang smyon 1990: 189: *dbang phyug mi la ras pa mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas pa'i gnas mchog / chu bar sprul sku'i pho brang*.

1101 G: 235.

1102 *sGra bsgyur mar pa lo tsha'i rnam thar mthong ba don yod*. The text is mentioned in Schaeffer, forthcoming. The copy that Schaeffer refers to is preserved in the archives of NGMPP, reel no. L9/11-L10/1.

1103 Smith 2001: 74.

1104 Vostrikov 1970: 189, n. 555. Jacques Bacot translated parts of it to French, and a complete English translation was made by Chögyam Trungpa and the Nālandā Translation Committee (Bacot 1937, Nālandā Translation Committee 1986). For a review of the latter, see Martin 1984.

1105 *sGra bsgyur mar pa lo tsa'i mgur 'bum* (NGMPP reel no. L194/7, E2518/2). The work is listed in Schaeffer, forthcoming.

1106 Listed in Schaeffer, forthcoming.

sentence only.[1107] This indicates that the disciples of gTsang smyon did not consider this work to be especially important, but history has proven them wrong. The life story of Marpa became an important text that—although not as popular and disseminated as Milarepa's—was widely read and accepted as authoritative far beyond the bKa' brgyud traditions.

The Aural Transmission Compilation

The popularity of the life stories and song collections of Marpa and Milarepa might overshadow gTsang smyon's largest literary production—an extensive collection of the Aural Transmissions (*snyan brgyud*) of the bKa' brgyud tradition. gTsang smyon worked on this project for the greater part of his life and completed it just before he died. The compilation contains many original works by gTsang smyon, and also works by other masters of the tradition.

As seen above, gTsang smyon was a lineage holder of several different bKa' brgyud Aural Transmissions and he devoted his whole life to practising, and transmitting them.[1108] Marta Sernesi, calls him "one of the great systematisers of the tradition."[1109] gTsang smyon's disciple rGod tshang ras pa became his principal successor as the lineage holder of the Aural Transmission but his other disciples also continued to disseminate these teachings after their master's death.[1110]

According to Lha btsun, gTsang smyon wrote a text called *An Outline of the Adamantine Verses that Dispels the Darkness of Ignorance* associated with the Aural Transmission during his first stay in Tsāri.[1111] dNgos grub dpal 'bar also mentions that gTsang smyon composed an Aural Transmission

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1107 G: 235.

1108 For a description of the Aural Transmission and how gTsang smyon received it, see Chapter 4.

1109 Sernesi, forthcoming. Her dissertation came out in 2007 (Sernesi 2007 a).

1110 For an account of how Lha btsun instructed Chos dbang rgyal mtshan in *sNyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang* and in the Dharma Lord (chos rje) gTsang pa's *(gTsang smyon) rnam thar* and *mgur 'bum*, see, for example, Ehrhard (Ehrhard 2000: 43, n. 35). There is an interesting untitled short transmission-lineage history of gTsang smyon's Aural Transmission in *Rare dKar brgyud texts from the Library of Ri bo che rje druṅ of Padma-bkod* (1974: 245–249). This rare texts follows what happened with the branch of the tradition that was transmitted by rGod tshang ras pa up to mKhyen rtse'i dbang po's (1820–1892) teacher: Dam pa dge'u mchog sprul rin po che dka' brgyud phrin las dbang phyug. According to TBRC (W19250) the text is titled *Account of gTsang smyon and the Saṃvara Ḍākinī Aural Transmission (gTsang smyon dang bde mchog mkha' 'gro snyan rgyud kyi lo rgyus)* and I have listed it under the Tibetan title in the Bibliography. The content of this text is summarized and partly translated in Sernesi 2007 a: 120–124. rGod tshang ras pa will be described more thoroughly in a separate section below.

1111 *rDo rje tshig rkang gi sa bcad ma rig mun sel.* L: 31. According to Lha btsun, gTsang smyon was in his early twenties at that time. This title is preserved as a seven folio manuscript in NGMPP's archives, reel no. L138/15.

text in Tsāri, but according to him it was composed during his second stay there, some years later.[1112]

gTsang smyon continued to write texts associated with the Aural Transmission. When he was in his late thirties, while spending three years at the holy La phyi hermitage, he composed most of the texts that later were included in his collection. dNgos grub dpal 'bar explains the reasons for devoting so much time and energy to this project as follows:

> Even though there were textbooks in Tibet about the above-mentioned root tantra of the instructions of the Aural Transmission of the Ḍākinīs, made by various scholars such as the Venerable Mila, most of these just consisted of some notes about how to practise. Besides [these notes] nothing was written down. Since the many profound [instructions] about practice were hidden inside the Aural Transmission, [gTsang smyon] was afraid [that these important instructions] would disappear in these degenerate times [and he] composed many rituals about the visualization of maṇḍalas [etc.].[1113]

rGod tshang ras pa also describes how gTsang smyon composed many Aural Transmission texts during his three-year retreat in La phyi.[1114] dNgos grub dpal 'bar mentions the name of some of the texts gTsang smyon composed in La phyi, and among the titles we find: *The Sādhana of the Revered Innate Goddess*,[1115] *The Root-verses of Oral Instructions*,[1116] *The Oral Instructions of the Body-maṇḍala*,[1117] *The Universal Panacea of the Vīra*,[1118] *The Six Ornaments*,[1119] and also a fire-ritual,[1120] and a consecration ritual.[1121] The compilation that gTsang smyon made "became similar to a guide (*lam mkhan*) or eyes (*mig*) of the oral precepts for those in the degenerate time [who aspire for] the accomplishment of enlightenment in one life. And it also made the

1112 N: 15b. It should be noted that the three disciples (G, L and N) have different opinions regarding when gTsang smyon composed certain texts. Some names of texts will therefore occur several times in the following description. rGod tshang ras pa describes that it was a visionary encouter with Vajrayoginī that occurred before he went to Tsāri that compelled gTsang smyon to propagate the Aural Transmission lineage (G: 116; Sernesi 2007 a: 103).

1113 N: 17a: *gong du smos pa'i gdams pa mkha' 'gro snyan rgyud kyi chu ba'i rgyud la / sngon pod du rje btsun mi la la sogs pa'i mkhas grub mang pos yig cha mdzad pa yod kyang / phal cher nyams len gyi tho tsam re las ma bkod cing / mngon rtogs dkyil cho ga mang po mdzad nas / nyams len gyi zab rgu rnams snyan rgyud du sbas pas / lnga brgyar gyur pa na nub kyis dogs te /.*

1114 G: 158–159.

1115 *rJe btsun lhan cig skyes ma'i sgrub thabs.*

1116 *Zhal gdams rtsa tshig.*

1117 *Lus dkyil zhal shes.*

1118 *dPa' bo chig thub.*

1119 *rGyan drug.*

1120 *sByin sreg.* An eighteen-folio manuscript of a *bDe mchog mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud sbyin bsreg* ritual which is ascribed to gTsang smyon is contained in NGMPP's archives, reel no. L324/2.

1121 *Rab gnas.* N: 17a.

teachings of the bKa' brgyud shine like the sun," dNgos grub dpal 'bar concludes.[1122]

In 1495 gTsang smyon went to Chu bar and gave empowerments and instruction of the Aural Transmission.[1123] The following winter he and his female companion Kun tu bzang mo, accompanied by a group of disciples, went to the capital of Gung thang where he was requested by the king of Gung thang, rNam rgyal lde to write more texts.[1124] gTsang smyon granted the king's request and composed an Aural Transmission text entitled *The Dharmakāya and Sambhogakāya Transference Manual*.[1125]

gTsang smyon continued to compose Aural Transmission texts, and while he was in Chu bar some years later he composed more texts. According to rGod tshang ras pa he composed the following titles at that time: *Body Maṇḍala*,[1126] *The Venerable Innate Mother*,[1127] *An Empowerment of the Protector Amitayus*,[1128] *A Few Words Summarizing the Oral Instructions*,[1129] *The Six Ornaments*,[1130] *The Universal Panacea of the Vīra*[1131] and, at the request of Kun tu bzang mo, *An Abbreviated Protector Sādhana*.[1132]

When returning from the restoration of the Svayambhū Stūpa in Nepal around 1504, he wrote texts for the appendix to the Aural Transmission manual.[1133] Finally, while residing in Chu bar, gTsang smyon made the necessary corrections in a twelve-volume version of his Aural Transmission compilation, and he also added some information to the biographies of Tilopa

1122 N: 17a: *lnga brgya'i dus su tshe gcig gis sangs rgyas sgrub pa'i gdams ngag rnams kyi mig gam / lam mkhan lta bur gyur pa 'dis kyang / bka' rgyud kyi bstan pa nyin mor mdzad pa lags so /.*

1123 G: 171. This is one of the few dated events in the *Heart of the Sun*. rGod tshang ras pa writes that it happened the fifteenth day of the first month of a Rabbit year, and based on information given in Lha btsun's and dNgos grub dpal 'bar's *rnam thars*, and due to the chronology of the narrative, this must refer to 1495, which was a *shing yos* (Tree-Rabbit) year.

1124 G: 172.

1125 *Chos sku dang longs sku 'pho ba yig cha*. G: 172. This text recently appeared in a list of texts that was stored in Tsurpo monastery in Tibet. gTsang smyon is listed as the author of a text called *Chos sku longs sku 'pho ba* in the list. In the list we also find another text by gTsang smyon: *Chos drug zin bris*. According to the accompanying letter, the many books mentioned in the list were going to be published in Chengdu and Derge. Thanks to Anne Burchardi at the Royal Library of Denmark for sending me this list. A two-folio manuscript ascribed to gTsang smyon entitled *Chos sku longs sku'i 'pho ba'i zhal shes* is contained in NGMPP's archives, reel no. L588/7.

1126 *Lus dkyil.*

1127 *rJe btsun lhan cig skye ma.*

1128 *mGon po tshe dpag med kyi dbang.*

1129 *Zhal gdams sdom tshig.*

1130 *rGyan drug.*

1131 *dPa'o chig thub.*

1132 *mGon po grub thabs 'dus pa*. G: 198. A thirty-one folio xylograph ascribed to gTsang smyon entitled *dPal ye shes kyi mgon po phyag bzhi (ba'i) sgrub thabs bskang (bso) [gso] mchod bstod dgos 'dod kun 'byung*, is contained in NGMPP's archives, reel no. L596/7. There is a discrepancy here, dNgos grub dpal 'bar stated above that he composed many of these titles earlier.

1133 G: 235.

and Nāropa that was included in the extensive commentary that he had written.[1134]

rGod tshang ras pa later wrote an index (*dkar chag*) that lists and describes the texts included in gTsang smyon's compilation.[1135] In the table of contents that rGod tshang ras pa composed we find many of the texts that are mentioned in the *rnam thars* of gTsang smyon, as well as other texts. Sernesi points out that "the index gives us a picture of what gTsang smyon's enterprise looked like at the end of his great efforts, and at the same time of the degree of intellectual systematization achieved by the tradition in the 16th century when conceiving itself."[1136]

Many of the texts that rGod tshang ras pa lists in the *dkar chag* have appeared in manuscript format in two collections of manuscripts published as *bDe mchog mkha' 'gro snyan rgyud (Ras chung snyan rgyud): Two manuscript collections of texts from the yig cha of gTsang smyon He ru ka.*[1137] These two collections, which I will call the "*Yig cha* manuals", contain several of the original works that gTsang smyon composed. The first collection is the most complete, but some texts that are missing from it are extant in the second collection. Not all the texts in the collection are authored by gTsang smyon, but several of them are. The most interesting extant text is perhaps *The Authoritative Commentary of the Aural Transmission of the Saṃvara/Ḍākinī in Conjunction with its Outline*[1138] or *The Authoritative Commentary [named] the Jewel Trilogy* (short: *Authoritative Commentary*).[1139] In its manuscript form it is more than 350 pages long[1140] and, as seen above, it was completed at the end of gTsang smyon's life. This is an extensive commentary to the *Adamantine Verses* and explains the tradition's root text word by word.[1141] According to Marta Sernesi the text can be seen as "representing a major source for understanding gTsang smyon as an Aural

[1134] *The Great Authoritative Commentary of the Aural Transmission* (*sNyan brgyud gzhung 'brel ['grel] chen mo*), G: 245–246, N: 23b, see also Sernesi 2007 a: 107. The whole compilation is sometimes called. *bDe mchog nor bu skor gsum* (*The trilogy of Saṃvara Jewels*) and the title refers to the three "Wish-fulfilling Gems" of the Aural Transmission. The "Gems" are the three main sections of the teachings, for a description of them, see Sernesi 2007 a: 143–191.

[1135] rGod tshang ras pa sNa tshogs rang grol 1974. Marta Sernesi has translated the table of contents in her dissertation, and she has also transliterated the Tibetan text (Sernesi 2007 a: 259–268).

[1136] Sernesi 2007 a: 260.

[1137] gTsang smyon 1971.

[1138] *bDe mchog mkha' 'gro snyan rgyud kyi gzhung 'brel ['grel] sa gcad [bcad] dang sbrags pa.*

[1139] *gZhung 'brel nor bu bskor gsum.* Both volumes contains this text, but in the second volume it is called *bDe mchog kha' 'gro snyan rgyud kyi gdams pa yid bzhin nor bu skor gsum.* The text is also contained in NGMPP's archives, reel no. L686/2–L686/1.

[1140] The *dbu med* manuscript is written out in Tibetan type pages but paginated in the Western way, i.e. front side: one, back side: two, etc.

[1141] *rDo rje'i tshig rkang.*

Transmission master."[1142] The *Authoritative Commentary* includes a so-called "golden rosary" (*gser 'phreng*) section with short life stories of each lama in the transmission lineage, from Vajradhara up to gTsang smyon's own lama Sha ra rab 'byams pa. *rNam thar*s of the following masters are include in the *Authoritative Commentary*:[1143]

1. rJe btsun rDo rje rnal 'byor ma
2. Ti lo Shes rab bzang po
3. Nā ro pa
4. Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros
5. Milarepa
6. Ras chung rDo rje grags
7. Khyung tshang pa Ye shes bla ma
8. a) Mar ston Tshul khrims 'byung gnas
   b) sLob dpon sTar bsgom
   c) Ma gcig Ong bhyo ras ma
9. Zhang lo tsa ba Byang chub 'od zer
10. 'Gro mgon lha rje Dha ra shri
11. Sras Byang sems bSod nams rgyal mtshan
12. Ma gcig 'Khrul zhig kun ldan ras ma
13. mKha btsun gZi brjid rgyal mtshan
14. mKhan po dBang phyug shes rab
15. Ri khrod ras pa gZhon nu rgyal mtshan
16. Ras chen pa gdan cig pa gZhon nu dpal ldan
17. La phyi pa mdong ston Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan
18. 'Dul 'dzin Ngag gi dbang po
19. Sha ra rab byams pa Sangs rgyas seng ge

Alternative lineages[1144]

Another important text of gTsang smyon that was also included in his compilation is *The Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Verse of the Aural Transmission.*[1145] rGod tshang ras pa regarded this text along with *The Adamantine Verses,*[1146] *The Small Adamantine Text*[1147] and *Nine Verses with Instructions of the Formless Ḍākinīs*[1148] as a part of the core texts of the Aural Transmission.[1149]

[1142] Sernesi, forthcoming.
[1143] gTsang smyon 1971, vol. 1: 21–115.
[1144] The sections of the *Authoritative Commentary* which describe the alternative lineages of the Aural Transmission that gTsang smyon received from Sha ra ba are outlined in Sernesi 2007 a: 113–116.
[1145] *sNyan brgyud tshig bcad yid bzhin nor bu.*
[1146] *rDo rje tshig rkang.*
[1147] *rDo rje'i gzhung chung.*
[1148] *Lus med mkha' 'gro'i gdams pa snyan rgyud rdo rje tshig dgu.*
[1149] rGod tshang ras pa 1974: 20–21. Sernesi 2007 a: 264. The *rDo rje tshig rkang* is a canonical scripture found in the *bsTan 'gyur*. The *rDo rje'i gzhung chung* is

rGod tshang ras pa seems to refer to the first *sNyan brgyud* text that gTsang smyon composed, the above-mentioned, *Outline of the Adamantine Verses that Dispels the Darkness of Ignorance.*[1150] This text is missing from the first collection of the *Yig cha* manuals, but it is extant in the second volume.[1151] There are nine more texts by gTsang smyon in the first volume of the *Yig cha* manuals.[1152] Among them we find a vase empowerment,[1153] a eulogy, a consecration ritual, a fire ceremony, instructions of transference (*'pho ba*), instructions of the secret conduct of Nāropa[1154] and also a permission blessing for the Four Armed Protector.[1155] Several of these texts were, as we have seen, mentioned in the *rnam thar*s of gTsang smyon, and they are also listed in the index that rGod tshang ras pa made. This means that many of the central Aural Transmission texts which gTsang smyon composed are still extant, some in the two collections of manuscripts, and some in the archives of the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project.

It is noteworthy that no block-print version of gTsang smyon's compilation has appeared. The two manuscript collections are minor in scope and length, and rGod tshang ras pa's *dkar chag* does not reflect such a collection. It thus remains to be clarified how the surviving manuscript collections, the table of contents (*dkar chag*) and the twelve-volume collection referred to in the *rnam thar*s relate to one another.[1156] Since no part of any block-print version of the work has appeared, it is somewhat unclear if the text ever existed in block-print form.

Miscellaneous Works

Most of the ritual texts and liturgies that gTsang smyon wrote were included in his great Aural Transmission compilation, but some did not fit in there.[1157] It is for instance mentioned that he composed a Hevajra text in Chu bar titled *A Daily Practice Text of Hevajra* when he was about twenty-six.[1158] rGod

attributed to Tilopa and *Lus med mkha' 'gro'i gdams pa snyan rgyud rdo rje tshig dgu* were revealed to Tilopa by the ḍākinīs.

1150 *rDo rje tshig rkang gi sa bcad ma rig mun sel.*

1151 gTsang smyon 1971, vol. 2: 17–27. The title given in the index is *sNyan rgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang gi sa bcad ma rig mun sel zhib mo bkod pa.*

1152 See the contents in gTsang smyon 1971, vol. 1: 1–6.

1153 According to the colophon this text was written in 1492.

1154 *Nāro gsang spyod kyi 'khrid.* Two manuscripts with this name are also found in NGMPP's archives, reel no. L108/16 and L109/8.

1155 *Phyag bzhi pa'i rjes gnang.* According to the colophon this text was written on behest of Kun tu bzang mo. This might be the above-mentioned *mGon po grub thabs dus pa* (*An Abbreviated Protector Sādhana*) that was mentioned in G: 198.

1156 Sernesi 2007 a: 29.

1157 An example of such text could be a dedication prayer named *rJe btsun gtsang smyon gyis mdzad pa'i b[s]ngo ba shin tu zab cig* (*Venerable gTsang smyon's Very Profound Dedication Prayer*), NGMPP reel no. L234/11. But I am uncertain whether this six folios manuscript text is a miscellaneous work or if it was a part of the Aural Transmission collection.

1158 *Kye rdor mngon rtogs.* G: 51; L: 50; N: 11b.

tshang ras pa also mentions that gTsang smyon composed a couple of Hevajra texts while he was staying in Chu bar in 1503. The names of the latter texts are *The Great Praise of Hevajra* and *A Discourse of Hevajra.*[1159]

Given the fact that Hevajra was gTsang smyon's *yidam* it is perhaps peculiar that gTsang smyon mainly composed texts related to Cakrasaṃvara, the reason for this was probably his strong affiliation with the bKa' brgyud tradition and its Aural Transmission. Although Hevajra is important in the bKa' brgyud traditions, it is Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī that are the main *yidams*. It is likely that gTsang smyon himself regarded Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara as being essentially the same, and that he therefore could use his experience in Hevajra meditation when he wrote about other *yidams*.

gTsang smyon moreover composed a prayer for blessing directed to Milarepa. This prayer is called *The Treasury of Blessings: A Prayer to the Venerable Laughing Vajra*[1160] and it is included in a compilation of prayers called *Accompanying Prayers of the Lineage [of the] Three Dohā cycles.*[1161] The supplication to Milarepa was printed at Ras chung phug under the direction of rGod tshang ras pa.

Another interesting and rare text that was executed as a block-print after his death is a work dealing with the literary genre, and the history of spiritual songs (*mgur*). This work is called *Opening of Faith: A [Text that] Dispels the Darkness of Ignorance [regarding] the Outline of Spiritual Songs*, and it is a short block-print (9 folios) that has survived in the "Sammlung Waddell."[1162]

There is also a travel document (*lam yig*) attributed to gTsang smyon, titled *An Authorized Permit of Travel.*[1163] This document with requests for food, provisions, lodging and other kinds of assistance that his disciples brought along with them on their pilgrimages to Ti se, La phyi and Tsāri is included in the *rnam thar* by rGod tshang ras pa.[1164] The travel document became well known and was also very useful since those who had it were provided easy passage and assistance during troublesome times. The mad yogin 'Brug pa Kun legs reproduced gTsang smyon's travel document in his autobiography and decided to write a similar one.[1165]

[1159] *dGe rdor stod chen* and *dGes rdor gleng bzhi*. G: 207. As Stearns [Kalnins] mentions, none of these Hevajra writings have appeared yet. Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 31.
[1160] *rJe btsun bzhad pa'i rdo rje la gsol ba 'debs byin rlabs kyi gter.*
[1161] *mDo ha bskor gsum rgyud pa'i gsol 'debs dang bcas pa*. The collection of supplications is available in NGMPP's archives, reel no. L803/5 and its length is 33 folios in total for the seven titles that are included (listed in Schaeffer, forthcoming).
[1162] *mGur kyi dkar chags ma rig mun sel dad pa'i mig 'byed.* Listed under gTsang smyon in the Bibliography.
[1163] *bKa' shog lam yig.*
[1164] G: 191–192.
[1165] The travel document is rendered in 'Brug pa kun legs 2005: 79–81 and 1974: 65–66. A French translation of the *lam yig* is found in Stein 1972: 143–145.

Finally, there are a few texts that are probably wrongly attributed to gTsang smyon. The most striking example is the folk drama (*a lce lha mo*) about Dri med kun ldan.[1166] This popular story that resembles the famous *Vessantarajātaka* is attributed to a certain rNal 'byor pa rus pa'i rgyan can in a recent Tibetan edition of the text.[1167] Since rNal 'byor pa rus pa'i rgyan can is one of gTsang smyon's epithets, the famous drama came to be attributed to gTsang smyon.[1168] Another example is a history of the Cakrasaṃvara tantric transmission, entitled *An Ancient History of Saṃvara*.[1169] According to Dan Martin, gTsang smyon authored this work, but it actually was gTsang smyon's disciple, rGod tshang ras pa, who wrote this text.[1170] A further example of a text that has been attributed to gTsang smyon is a *rnam thar* about rGod tshang mgon po rdo rje (1189–1258), named *The Liberation Account of rGyal ba rGod tshang mGon po rdo rje: A Rosary of Jewels which is Meaningful to Behold*.[1171] But this is a mistake. In the colophon of the text it is stated that the *rnam thar* was compiled by Sangs rgyas dar po.[1172] Gene Smith also writes that the *rnam thar* was authored by Sangs rgyas dar po who was a disciple of both gTsang smyon and Lha btsun.[1173] The version of the text that is available as a microfilm in the archives of NGMPP has the above-mentioned prayer to Milarepa that gTsang smyon wrote inserted at the end.[1174] This must be the reason for the confusion. gTsang smyon was indeed the author, but not of the whole *rnam thar*, only of its last pages.

[1166] *Chos kyi rgyal po dri med kun ldan kyi mdzad tshul rgyas pa mu tig phreng ba*. The text was translated into French by Jacques Bacot and later into English by Woolf (See Bibliography under Bacot 1924).

[1167] rNal 'byor rus pa'i rgyan can 1993.

[1168] See, for example, TBRC. The Zi ling edition of the text that was published 1993 lacks a colophon, and I therefore do not know why Rus pa'i rgyan can was listed as its author. In other versions of the text and in translations neither gTsang smyon nor Rus pa'i rgyan can are mentioned. Since I have not found any reference to this work in the *rnam thars* about gTsang smyon either, I think it is most plausible to assume that gTsang smyon did not compose this text.

[1169] *bDe mchog sngon byung gi lo rgyus*. The text is found in NGMPP's archives reel no. L514/8.

[1170] Martin 1997: 136.The work is listed as authored by rGod tshang ras pa in Schaeffer (forthcoming) and it has been studied by Sernesi (personal communication).

[1171] *rGyal ba rgod tshang mgon po rdo rje'i rnam par thar pa mthong ba don ldan nor bu'i phreng ba*. The text is found in Khams sprul don brgyud nyi ma (ed.) 1976 (part IV) and also in NGMPP reel no. L978/8. gTsang smyon is listed as the author of this text both by the NGMPP and also by Kurtis Schaeffer who studied the archives of NGMPP, reel no. L978/8, (Schaeffer, forthcoming).

[1172] In the colophon it is stated that the text was written by Sangs rgyas dar po, a Male, Iron Mouse year (1540), Sangs rgyas dar po dpal bzang 1540: 115a, Sangs rgyas dar po dpal bzang 1976: 344.

[1173] Smith 2001: 78 and 289, n. 197. According to the edition that was made by Khams sprul Don brgyud nyi ma, the text was written by Sangs rgyas dar po an Iron Rat year at Lha phyi, Khams sprul don brgyud nyi ma (ed.), 1976, vol. IV.

[1174] Sangs rgyas dar po dpal bzang 1540: 116a.

Other Sources that Shed Light on gTsang smyon and his Tradition

Although the most important sources about gTsang smyon are the *rnam thars* about him and the texts that he wrote, there are also other texts that provide us with important information about him. In this section, an overview of some of these texts and their contents will be given. The most interesting texts to look at for this study are perhaps those written about and by rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun, who composed two of the main sources upon which this study is based. They were both key figures in upholding and propagating "the school of gTsang smyon" and they were instrumental in compiling and printing texts. Although both rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun merit a specialized study in their own right, a short overview of their life and works will give us a wider context about gTsang smyon and his tradition. When surveying their life stories the focus will be devoted to sections that relate to their relation with gTsang smyon. Then we will take a brief look at some other relevant figures and texts.

The Life and Works of rGod tshang ras pa

rGod tshang ras pa (1482–1559)[1175] was, together with Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal, one of gTsang smyon's most well-known and important disciples. In the few drawings of him that have been preserved he looks similar to gTsang smyon. According to the drawings, both of them kept their long hair in a topknot, and had large earrings and bone ornaments. There is a small block-print illustration of rGod tshang ras pa at the end of the *Heart of the Sun*. In this picture rGod tshang ras pa is depicted with a bow and a set of arrows.[1176] "rGod tshang" means "vulture's nest", and "ras pa" means "a cotton clad one". rGod tshang ras pa is thus a sobriquet, and its meaning is the "Cotton-Clad One from the Vulture's nest". Apart from this name he is

[1175] There has been some confusion regarding the identity and dates of rGod tshang ras pa, and he has sometimes been conflated with other masters with similar names who lived in the same period. This has been discussed by Ehrhard, forthcoming c; Roberts 2007: 44; Sernesi 2007 b: 8. Franz-Karl Ehrhard has recently more or less resolved these problems, and he proposes that the dates were 1482–1559, Ehrhard, forthcoming c.

[1176] See Figure 25 (p. 226) and G: 287. The bow and arrow are symbols that are found among several Indian siddhas that served as role models for rGod tshang ras pa and gTsang smyon. Saraha is often depicted with an arrow, and according to his life stories he worked as a fletcher. Another siddha, Śavaripa, was a hunter, and the hunting theme is also sometimes found among Tibetan masters. For example, Ra Nam mkha' dpal bzang (Ra smyon, 1398–1425) was a hunter, and 'Brug pa kun legs is often depicted with a bow, arrows, and a hunting dog (Stein 1972: 9). A small painting of rGod tshang ras pa is included among the twenty-nine figures that surround a 16th century thanka of Amitāyus. In this picture he appears almost identical to gTsang smyon who is also depicted on the thanka. Both have long hair, a khaṭvāṅga, a skullcup and a vajra. And they are both sitting semi cross-legged with meditation belts. Essen, Gerd Wolfgang and Thingo, Tsering Tashi 1989: 132, picture no. II-284.

often called rGod tshang ras chen, the "Great Cotton-Clad One from the Vulture's nest". Like gTsang smyon, rGod tshang ras pa was known as "a man with many names"[1177] among which one finds rGod phrug ras pa Don gnyis mthar phyin and sNa tshogs rang grol. The latter seem to be his proper name and it is often used together with rGod tshang ras pa, thus we have rGod tshang ras pa sNa tshogs rang grol.

rGod tshang ras pa wrote a short (8 folio) undated autobiography (*rang rnam*) in verse entitled the *Life Story in Verse of the Lord of Yogins rGod tshang ras chen which is an Ocean of Accomplishments*.[1178] According to the autobiography, rGod tshang ras pa was born in the village of Lha ru in Yar lung.[1179] It is also stated in the text that he belonged to a noble caste and that his clan was *mGos*. rGod tshang ras pa was the eldest of seven children, and he was born when his father, bSam rdor, was twenty-five and his mother, rDo rje bu khrid, was nineteen. The birth occurred on the tenth day of a Tiger year, and although the *rnam thar* does not mention which Tiger year, it has now been more or less resolved that rGod tshang ras pa was born in 1482.[1180]

rGod tshang ras pa was an exceptional child and he was born with a yogic gaze while uttering the sacred syllables A and HUṂ. As a child he always thought about the sad fact that everyone has to die, and he had no interest in engaging in worldly activities. According to his autobiography, rGod tshang ras pa never had a non-religious thought, and as a child he amused himself by performing monastic dances, bestowing empowerments and teaching dharma. He learned to read and write without being taught, and could remember all the teachings and stories that he heard. rGod tshang ras pa's childhood thus resembled the childhoods of many other great masters, and his unusual behavior proved that he had practised Buddhism in many previous lives. He stayed with his mother until he was five and then they moved to a place not far from his birthplace called Vulture's Nest (rGod tshang) in rKyam yul.[1181]

When he was eight years old (1489) he heard about gTsang smyon for the first time: "A tea-merchant who had been to Lhasa said, 'There was a yogin,

[1177] *Du ma'i ming/mtshan can.*

[1178] I will call it *An Ocean of Accomplishments*. In the Bibliography it is listed as rGod tshang ras pa sNa tshogs rang grol, *rNal 'byor gyi dbang phyug rgod tshang ras chen pa'i rnam thar tshigs bcad ma dngos grub kyi rgya mtsho*. Ehrhard has done a thorough study and provides a summarized translation of this text, see Ehrhard forthcoming c.

[1179] The spelling of the place is Yar mo lung in the *rnam thar*, which is an old way of spelling Yar lung/Yar klungs. *An Ocean of Accomplishments*: 1.

[1180] The Tiger year could refer to 1470, 1482 or 1494. Both Sernesi and Roberts discuss the problems with his dates (Roberts 2007: 43–44; Sernesi 2007 b: 8–9). Ehrhard has done the most thorough, and in my opinion convincing, investigation of the matter, see Ehrhard, forthcoming c.

[1181] *An Ocean of Accomplishments*: 2a.

who wore a human skin, named Tsangnyön [gTsang smyon]', and as soon as I heard that my body-hair stood up and tears came to my eyes."[1182]

His karmic connection with gTsang smyon was thus awakened, but many years were to pass before he met the mad yogin in person.

In the following years rGod tshang ras pa received many teachings and empowerments from various teachers, some of whom were his own relatives.[1183] When rGod tshang ras pa was fourteen some mendicants arrived, and he ran away from home disguised as a mentally disabled person.[1184] While traveling he met a learned master called Shel dkar who gave him ordination, and he was given the name Byams pa Shākya dpal bzang.[1185]

rGod tshang ras pa continued his studies and received more teachings. He also did retreats and gained first-hand experience of what he had studied. On one occasion a yogin named rTog ldan rin (-chen) arrived where he was studying, and spoke of gTsang smyon. rGod tshang ras pa once again was profoundly affected when hearing about gTsang smyon.

> Because [rTog ldan rin] made an excellent proclamation of the life story [and] deeds of the actual Vajradhara, the Dharma Lord, the Jina of the three realms—gTsang smyon Heruka—I became settled in an unconscious state, similar to madness. The appearances of this life fell apart completely and I thought that I had to end my studies and leave the very next day.[1186]

rGod tshang ras pa then asked the teacher with whom he was studying, dGe 'phel chos phel, for permission to leave and search for gTsang smyon. His teacher told him that the experience he had had was an obstacle that should be ignored. rGod tshang ras pa therefore stayed, but he felt deep regret and sadness for having obeyed his teacher, or to use his own words, he felt "like one lacking a ferry at the river bank".[1187]

rGod tshang ras pa then went for a pilgrimage to the holy Tsāri and while traveling he met another famous *smyon pa*, dBus smyon Kun dga' bzang po, at bKra shis sgang. The mad yogin predicted his future as a master of the Aural Transmission.[1188]

1182 Roberts 2007: 43; *An Ocean of Accomplishments*: 2a–2b: *de dus lha sar phyin pa'i ja tshongs pas / / gtsang smyon zhes bya mi lpags gsol ba yi / / rnal 'byor pa gcig 'dug zhes thos ma thag / / ba spu g.yo zhing mchi ma 'khrug par byung /.*

1183 This period is depicted in some detail by Ehrhard, forthcoming c.

1184 *lKug pa*, could also mean mute. *An Ocean of Accomplishments*: 3b.

1185 *An Ocean of Accomplishments*: 3b.

1186 *An Ocean of Accomplishments*: 4a: *[...] khams sum rgyal ba chos kyi rje / / rdo rje 'chang dngos gtsang smyon he ru ka'i / / sku dang rnam thar mdzad pa rab brjod pas / / smyo 'bog 'dra bar dran med chod kyis song / / tshe 'di'i snang ba khral ma khrol mar zhig / / slob gnyer bzhag nas sang rang 'gro dgos snyam /.* This section is also translated by Ehrhard, but I have translated the passage slightly differently, Ehrhard, forthcoming c.

1187 *An Ocean of Accomplishments*: 4a: *chu khar gru med 'dra.*

1188 *An Ocean of Accomplishments*: 4b.

After that he returned to his home region in Yar lung and stayed for a while with one of his main teachers, 'Khrul zhig kun dga' bsam gtan. He then continued his quest for dharma traveling between different masters, receiving teachings and empowerments, and practising intensively in various locations. While engaged in intense practice, he once again was overcome by an unbearably strong longing for the Dharma Lord, gTsang smyon.[1189] He asked for permission to search for him, and this time his request was granted.[1190] Very happy, on the full-moon day the year 1500, he left his teacher and relatives who came to bid him farewell. After a long journey, in the spring 1501, he reached Chu bar where gTsang smyon was on a three-year retreat for the benefit of others before restoring the Svayambhū Stūpa.[1191] It was during this period that rGod tshang ras pa met gTsang smyon for the first time. Their meeting is described in some detail in rGod tshang ras pa's *rnam thar*.

> [...] Early in the morning, at sunrise on the twenty-ninth day, at Pho brang dar rgyas, above [a place] known as Tshag, I met the Lord Pha rgod gTsang smyon in person. [He is the,] unification of the compassion of all the buddhas, the main [deity] of all maṇḍalas: Samantabhadra [and also] Vajradhara. Like the reflection of the sun [and] the moon in many water pots is dispersed into many, while its essence is not divided, [he has] manifested as the Nirmāṇakāya, the ruler of the Jinas.
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> [...] Undefiled bliss of the three doors (i.e. body, speech and mind) [as if in] a drunken state [arose]; I was left in a dimension where I passed directly through [all] turmoil [and] unrest. [...] My mind [and] the stream of consciousness [of the master] became one. Free from any doubts, the conception of being a buddha arose. Although [gTsang smyon] uttered many scolding and annihilating words, besides joy and happiness, there was no hesitation from deep within: even if I would die, there would arise an uncontrived mind of fearless love![1192]

rGod tshang ras pa then stayed with gTsang smyon for about a year and received instructions and empowerments. Eventually the twenty-one-year-old yogin became counted as "the youngest among the heart-sons of the Noble

[1189] *An Ocean of Accomplishments*: 5b.

[1190] *An Ocean of Accomplishments*: 6a.

[1191] G: 194–208.

[1192] *An Ocean of Accomplishments*: 6b: *[...] nyer dgu'i snga dro nyi ma rtse shar la / tshag zhes steng du pho brang dar rgyas su / sangs rgyas kun gyi thugs rje cig bsdus pa / dkyil 'khor kun gtso kun bzang rdo rje 'chang / chu snod du mar nyi zla'i gzugs snang ltar / du mar 'gye kyang ngo bo dbyer ma byed / rgyal ba'i dbang po sprul pa'i skur bzhengs pa / pha rgod gtsang smyon rje dang dngos su mjal / [...] / sgo gsum zag med bde ba'i ra ro ba / ban bun zang zing zang thal ngang du lus / [...] sems rgyud cig tu gyur / sangs rgyas 'du shes the tshom bral bar skyes / tshar gcod bka' bskyon mang du gnang byung kyang / dga' spro ma gtogs yid gnyis gting nas med / shi yang phod pa'i gdung sems bcos min shar /.* The passage is also translated in Ehrhard, forthcoming c. I have relied upon his translation when translating this passage.

One Adorned with Bone Ornaments".[1193] gTsang smyon then departed to Nepal to renovate the Svayambhū Stūpa, and rGod tshang ras pa remained in secluded places to practise. He dwelled at many famous places frequented by yogins for meditation practice, such as La phyi, rDzong drug (The Six Forts), Chu bar, Tsāri, Kong po, Yol mo and Zab lung.[1194]

rGod tshang ras pa lived a long and active life. After gTsang smyon's passing, he devoted much time and energy to disseminating and upholding the teachings he had received from him. In *Treasury of Oral Instructions* he is mentioned as the lineage holder of two of the main teaching transmissions of gTsang smyon, namely the Aural Transmission of Saṃvara and the Ḍākinīs and the Four Letter Mahāmudrā.[1195] A few of his many teachers are enumerated at the end of *An Ocean of Accomplishments*, and in addition to gTsang smyon and his female partner Kun tu bzang mo, the famous Sa skya pa scholar Śākya mchog ldan and the Seventh Karma pa Chos grags rgya mtsho are listed.[1196]

The texts that rGod tshang ras pa composed show that he, like his master, was interested in hagiographies of former bKa' brgyud masters, and also that he had an interest in the Aural Transmissions (*snyan brgyud*) of the bKa' brgyud tradition. Pictures of him show that he was a yogin, and his name indicates that he was a "cotton-clad one"—a *ras pa*.

rGod tshang ras pa's main residence was Ras chung phug, but he also founded a monastery called Island of Vulture's Nest[1197] in Yol mo, present day Nepal.[1198] Moreover, it is recorded in the pilgrimage guide to the old and famous Thundering Falcon temple,[1199] which is situated not far from Ras chung phug, that he erected a chapel of the Eleven-Headed Avalokiteśvara in the Falcon temple.[1200]

Ras chung phug is situated on the side of a mountain called Lo ma lo ri that separates the Yar lung and the 'Phyongs rgyas valleys, about ten kilometers south of rTse thang.[1201] Before its destruction, it was a large monastery

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1193 G: 208: *rje btsun rus pa'i rgyan can gyi thugs sras rnams gyi nang nas tha chung tu gyur pa.*

1194 *An Ocean of Accomplishments*: 8a.

1195 *bDe mchog mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud* and *Phyag rgya chen po yi ge bzhi pa.* The transmission lineage of these teachings to rGod tshang ras pa is given in 'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas (ed.) *gDams ngag mdzod* 1979–1981, vol. *Nya*: 40–41, 62–63.

1196 *An Ocean of Accomplishments*: 8a.

1197 rGod tshang gling.

1198 Ehrhard 2004 b: 583–584. According to a family document that belongs to Karma Ras chung in Yol mo, a certain Karma Chos bzang came from Ras chung phug and settled in rGod tshang gling. Karma Ras chung belonged to his family line, and according to the ancient document it was descendants of Karma Chos bzang who later resided and were in charge of the monastery and its many branch temples (Ehrhard 2004 b: 582–583).

1199 Khra 'brug.

1200 bCu gcig lha khang. Sørensen, Hazod and Gyalbo 2005: 86. The name used for him is Kun mkhyen sNa tshogs Ras chen, which must refer to rGod tshang ras pa. This is also noted by Ehrhard (forthcoming c).

1201 For Ras chung phug references, see footnote 1204.

with its own series of Ras chung incarnations as abbots and about a thousand resident monks.[1202] This number had decreased to about sixty in 1959, and the complex was completely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution.[1203] Besides being the place where rTsang smyon passed away, Ras chung phug is connected with Milarepa's well-known disciple Ras chung pa.[1204] rGod tshang ras pa was closely linked with this illustrious master, and both gTsang smyon and rGod tshang ras pa resembled Ras chung pa (1085–1161) more than Milarepa's famous monk disciple sGam po pa (1079–1153), which sets them apart from other bKa' brgyud pa masters. Many of the practices which they devoted time and energy to practising and disseminating stemmed from Ras chung pa, and the tradition they followed is sometimes even called Ras chung bKa' brgyud. gTsang smyon also passed away at Ras chung phug (the Cave of Ras chung) and Ras chung phug was the main seat of the Aural Transmission of Ras chung pa—*Ras chung snyan brgyud.*

Thanks to an autobiography of one of his disciples, Byams pa phun tshogs (1503–1581), we know that rGod tshang ras pa passed away in 1559.[1205] Ac-

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1202 Hugh Richardson photographed it when he visited in 1949 and an interesting old photo is contained in Richardson 1998: plate 69.

1203 Batchelor 1987: 255. rGod tshang ras pa appears to have been a very important person in the history of Ras chung phug and his activities contributed to transforming what originally were some small buildings around a cave into an important religious center with a large number of monks. Many texts were printed here, and pilgrims visited from afar to receive teachings and empowerments. In his pilgrimage guide to the holy places of central Tibet, mKhyen brtse dbang po (1820–1892) mentions that gTsang smyon had stayed at Ras chung phug, and he also states that many sacred objects were housed there, Ferrari (trans.) 1958: 51. Si tu chos kyi rgya mtso (1880–1924) describes Ras chung phug more thoroughly in his guidebook (Situ chos kyi rgya mtsho 1980: 250–251). He mentions that one of the most important statues in Ras chung phug was a life-size statue of gTsang smyon which was adorned with silver skulls, and made by rGod tshang ras pa. He also states that rGod tshang ras pa had erected statues of each lineage holder of the Aural Transmission of Ras chung tradition, and that the temple housed a golden statue of rGod tshang ras pa. Finally he mentions that rGod tshang ras pa's remains were kept in one of the halls of the monastery (Situ chos kyi rgya mtsho 1980: 250–251).

1204 Ras chung phug is described in several Tibet guidebooks, see for example: Batchelor 1987: 255–258; Chang 1994: 347–348; Gyurme Dorje 2004: 203. Unfortunately the guidebooks contain some misinformation. gTsang smyon is confuted with gTsang pa rgya ras (1161–1211) both by Chang (1994: 348) and by Batchelor (1987: 258), and Gyurme Dorje, whose guidebook generally is reliable, wrongly asserts that gTsang smyon wrote Mi la's life story here (2004: 203). A short description of the place is also found in Richardson 1998: 319–320. Much concise information and many references are also found in Sørensen, P.K., Hazod, in Cooperation with Gyalbo, T. 2005: 108, n. 277. Ras chung phug is one of the few places in Tibet where gTsang smyon is still remembered, and a recently made statue of him is regarded as the most important object of worship in the small cave temple that remains today. The statue was consecrated while Stephen Batchelor visited Ras chung phug in the eighties, and he mentions that it had been brought from Lhasa (Bachelor 1987: 255). Photos of this gTsang smyon statue are reproduced in the section with illustrations, see Figures 2 (p. 258) and 16 (p. 265). Photos of Ras chung phug as it looks today are also reproduced, see Figures 14 and 15 (p. 264).

1205 *mKhas grub chen po byams pa phun tshogs kyi rnam thar*, NGMPP reel no. L783/3. Ehrhard mentions this *rnam thar* and he also has translated a section of it (Ehrhard 2004 b: 584–586). See also Ehrhard, forthcoming b.

cording to this text, rGod tshang ras pa passed away in Ras chung phug shortly after Byams pa phun tshogs had completed a print of the *rnam thar* of Ras chung pa that rGod tshang ras pa compiled.[1206]

rGod tshang ras pa was a prolific author/compiler who published about twelve works that together comprise more than seven-hundred folios.[1207] The most famous of them is probably his *rnam thar* about Ras chung pa, which was to become the standard edition of Ras chung pa's life story.[1208] The composition of *rnam thars* was obviously of great importance to him. In addition to the *rnam thar* about Ras chung and the one about his own root lama (gTsang smyon), he also wrote a *rnam thar* of Lo ras pa dbang phyug brtson 'grus (1187–1250).[1209] Together with Kun tu bzang mo and some other disciples he also compiled the above-mentioned collection of gTsang smyon's songs.[1210] rGod tshang ras pa also authored texts that are connected with the history, lineage and practices of the Aural Transmission of Cakrasaṃvara that he received from gTsang smyon and other lamas. One of these works was an index (*dkar chag*) of gTsang smyon's magnum opus, his Aural Transmission compilation. The title of this short text, which was referred to above, is *Treasury of Jewels—An Index of the Aural Transmissions of Cakrasaṃvara*,[1211] and it provides an interesting description of the contents of gTsang smyon's lost compilation.[1212] rGod tshang ras pa also composed a general work on the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* titled *General Explanation of the Victorious Cakrasaṃvara the Feast Elixir of the Supreme Vehicle the Highest Remedy of Great Wisdom.*[1213] Both these texts were written at Tsāri, probably around the same period, since this is a place where rGod tshang ras pa did not usually reside.[1214] rGod tshang ras pa also composed

1206 Sernesi 2007 b: 9. Ehrhard, forthcoming b.

1207 Schaeffer, forthcoming.

1208 *rJe btsun ras chung pa'i rnam thar rnam mkhyen thar lam gsal bar ston pa'i me long ye shes kyi snang ba* (240 folios). For more information of this and other editions of Ras chung pa's *rnam thars*, see Roberts 2007.

1209 Both the *rnam thar* about Ras chung pa and the one about Lo ras pa dbang phyug brtson 'grus have been published in Khams sprul don brgyud nyi ma (ed.) *bKa brgyud pa hagiographies: a collection of rnam-thar of eminent masters of Tibetan Buddhism*. Vol. 2 (Lo ras pa) and vol. 3 (Ras chung pa).

1210 gTsang smyon, *rJe btsun gtsang pa he ru ka'i mgur 'bum rin po che dbang gi rgyal po thams cad mkhyen pa'i lam ston.*

1211 *bDe mchog mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud kyi dkar chags rin po che'i gter.*

1212 A full transliteration and translation of this text is found in Sernesi, forthcoming b: 259–268. The *dKar chag* itself, written in *dbus med* is found in *Rare dKar brgyud texts from the Library of Ri bo che rje drung of Padma-bkod.* The work is listed under rGod tshang ras pa sNa tshogs rang grol, 1974, in the Bibliography.

1213 *bCom ldan 'das dpal 'khor lo sdom pa'i spyi bshad theg mchog bdud rtsi'i dga' ston ye shes chen po'i sman mchog.*

1214 Sernesi 2007 b: 13.

and printed a short historical text on Cakrasaṃvara named *Ancient History of the Glorious Cakrasaṃvara.*[1215]

The Life and Works of Lha btsun

Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal (1473–1557), alongside rGod tshang ras pa, is arguably gTsang smyon's most important disciple. Smith states that he "for a number of reasons, can be regarded as the most significant student of gTsang smyon."[1216] His importance is at least partly derived from the fact that he belonged to the royal family of Gung thang.[1217] The kings of the Gung thang family were believed to be descendants of the old Tibetan Royal Dynasty, and the title "lha btsun" means "Divine Venerable One". According to Tibetan mythology, the ancient rulers of Tibet were all descended from the gods, and Lha btsun was therefore regarded as a divine person already at birth. Smith moreover mentions that Lha btsun was considered to be the rebirth of a disciple of Bo dong phyogs las rnam rgyal (1376–1451), named Kun dga' rgyal mtshan of sGang dkar ba who was the abbot of mTho lding in Gu ge.[1218] Lha btsun was thus exalted in both a worldly and spiritual sense, and his high position is also reflected by the many important and famous teachers that he had.[1219] gTsang smyon became his most important teacher, however, and Lha btsun in turn contributed to gTsang smyon's fame by actively promoting him and his lineage.

Lha btsun's fame and importance led to the composition of at least two biographies about him, and several artisans made statues of him.[1220] He is thus the disciple of gTsang smyon about whom we know the most, and he is also the subject of a forthcoming doctoral dissertation.[1221]

[1215] *dPal 'khor lo sdom pa sngon gyur lo rgyus*. The work is mentioned in Schaeffer, forthcoming. As mentioned above this text has sometimes been wrongly attributed to gTsang smyon.

[1216] Smith 2001: 75.

[1217] According to Smith (2001: 75), Lha btsun was the son of the ruler of Gung thang, Khri rNam rgyal lde (1422–1502). Everding states that Lha btsun seem to have been confused with the son of the elder son of this ruler, Nor bu lde (1450–1484). This son's name is Lha btsun kun dga' rnam rgyal, and Everding holds it to be very likely that Lha btsun rin chen rnam rgyal and Lha btsun kun dga' rnam rgyal have been conflated due to the likeness of their names and due to the fact that they had the same title (Everding 2000: 548–549, n. 1412). Exactly how Lha btsun is related to the royal family thus remains to be resolved. The only information about Lha btsun's parents in the life stories is that his mother was the daughter of the elder brother of Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (*Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 284).

[1218] Smith 2001: 75.

[1219] Smith lists some of his teachers (Smith 2001: 75).

[1220] A statue of Lha btsun from Brag dkar rta so is reproduced in Stearns 2000: 15. Another statue of him is found in *Monastaries y lamas del Tibet: Exposición Orgnizada por la Fundación "La Caixa"*, 2000: 131. For a block-print drawing of Lha btsun, see Figure 24 (p. 267).

[1221] Michela Clemente, *The Life of Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal (1473–1557) according to his rNam mgur and rNam thar*, Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza".

Lha btsun built a small monastery in Brag dkar rta so,[1222] a small but important holy site associated with Milarepa situated near sKyid grong, not far from the Nepalese border in Southern Tibet. Here he established an important printing house where a large number of hagiographies, histories, song collections and contemplative manuals of the bKa' brgyud pa order were produced for hundreds of years.[1223]

The two *rnam thar*s about Lha btsun were probably composed in Brag dkar rta so, but since no author, date or place of printing are mentioned, many questions about these interesting texts remain unanswered.[1224] The names of the two texts are the *Self-Manifestation of the Inconceivable Dharmakāya: The Biography and Songs of the Holy Glorious Accomplished Master Lha btsun King of Dharma*[1225] and the *Second Part of the Biography of the Lord of Yogins, Lha btsun King of Dharma*.[1226] The first-mentioned text, that I will call *Life and Songs of Lha btsun*,[1227] is possibly an autobiography, and it contains songs attributed to Lha btsun. The latter text could be the second part of this text. However, Smith is inclined to believe that the text is the second part (*smad cha*) of a *rnam thar* in two parts, and that the first part (*stod cha*) exists but has not yet come to light.[1228]

Although both these texts provide much information about Lha btsun, it is the *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* that contains the most information about gTsang smyon. To obtain a preliminary idea of Lha btsun's relationship with gTsang smyon I will summarize some relevant sections of this text.

Lha btsun's first meeting with gTsang smyon occurred when Lha btsun was thirteen years old (1485) in Crystal Cave (Shel phug) in Lha stod lho.[1229] Shel phug is a famous retreat site of Milarepa near the village of 'Brin in Southern Tibet, and according to the *Life and songs of Lha btsun*, gTsang smyon was organizing the carving of the wood-blocks for Milarepa's *rnam thar* and *mgur 'bum* when Lha btsun arrived.[1230] That the carving of Mi-

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[1222] There is an interesting book on the history of Brag dkar rta so written by Brag dkar rta so sPrul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug (b. 1775) entitled: *Grub pa'i gnas chen brag dkar rta so'i gnas dang gdan rab bla ma brgyud pa'i lo rgyus mdo tsam brjod pa mos ldan dad pa'i gdung sel drang srong dga' ba'i dal gtam*. Brag dkar rta so sPrul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug 1816.

[1223] Schaeffer, forthcoming.

[1224] Schaeffer, forthcoming. The texts are found both in NGMPP's archives (reel no. L456/7), and in Tucci Tibetan fund (De Rossi Filibeck 1993: 331, no. 657 section 5/6). Smith suggests that the texts were composed in the 16th century (Smith 2001: 75).

[1225] *dPal ldan bla ma dam pa mkhas grub lha btsun chos gyi rgyal po'i rnam mgur blo 'das chos sku'i rang gdangs*. The text was published 1976, in Urgyan Dorje (ed.), *Rare dKar-brgyud-pa Texts from Himachal Pradesh*, New Delhi.

[1226] *rNal 'byor dbang phyug lha btsun chos kyi rgyal po'i rnam thar gyi smad cha*. This text is available as a microfilm in NGMPP's archives, reel no. L456/7; L11/20; L477/13; E2251/1.

[1227] In the Bibliography it is found under its full title: *dPal ldan bla ma dam pa mkhas grub lha btsun chos gyi rgyal po'i rnam mgur blo 'das chos sku'i rang gdangs*, 1976.

[1228] Smith 2001: 75.

[1229] *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 289–290.

[1230] *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 290.

larepa's life story and songs was done in Crystal Cave is confirmed by the *rnam thar*'s about gTsang smyon[1231] but according to the colophon of Milarepa's *rnam thar* this text was completed in 1488.[1232] rGod tshang ras pa states that it took two years for the work to be completed, and subtracting two years means that he was already working with it in 1486.[1233] The *Life and songs of Lha btsun* thus confirms that gTsang smyon made the block-prints in Crystal Cave and the dates correspond quite well with the information given in the *rnam thar*s about gTsang smyon.[1234]

During their first encounter, gTsang smyon instructed Lha btsun in the Four Letter Mahāmudrā, and limitless happiness arose in Lha btsun's body and mind.[1235] gTsang smyon personally guided Lha btsun in meditation and told him to look at his mind. The following day Lha btsun went to gTsang smyon who asked him if he could see the mind and Lha btsun answered:

> "One cannot see the mind by looking with one's own [mind]."
> "Why not?" [gTsang smyon] asked.
> "Like it is said in *sPyod 'jug*:[1236] 'A sharp knife cannot cut itself.'
> Likewise, the mind cannot see itself," answered [Lha btsun].[1237]

gTsang smyon was pleased with Lha btsun's answer and told him that he could be his [spiritual] father.[1238]

Having been introduced to his mind by gTsang smyon, Lha btsun departed and studied with other teachers. Then, when he was sixteen years old (1488), he met gTsang smyon again, and this time gTsang smyon prophesied that Lha btsun would become an excellent teacher. He also told Lha btsun to study with other teachers for nine or ten years, and then return to him.[1239]

While Lha btsun was studying with other teachers, gTsang smyon's mother passed away and he traveled to his homeland to conduct ceremonies for her.[1240] Lha btsun heard that gTsang smyon and sixty followers stayed

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[1231] L: 98; G: 139.

[1232] According to the colophon of Milarepa's *rnam thar* it was completed in a year called phur bu. This corresponds to Earth-Monkey year, which is equivalent to 1488 (gTsang smyon 1979: 199).

[1233] G: 148.

[1234] Lha btsun's *rnam thar* of gTsang smyon indicates that the works were completed around 1491.

[1235] *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 290.

[1236] *Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la. 'jug pa* (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*).

[1237] *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 290: *rang gi sems la rang gis bltas pas mi mthong ba 'dug lags zhus pas / rgyu mtshan ci yin gsung ba la / spyod 'jugs las / ral gri'i son ring la rang / ji ltar mi gcod de bzhin yid / sems kyis sems mi mthong zhes gsungs.*

[1238] *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 290.

[1239] *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 291.

[1240] It is mentioned that gTsang smyon was collecting money for the whitewashing of the Svayambhū Stūpa during his return to his homeland (*Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 291). The whitewashing was done in 1495 according to rGod tshang ras pa (G: 171). Lha btsun confirms this when he mentions that gTsang smyon was forty-four when he retuned from Nepal (L: 102). The meeting between Lha btsun and gTsang smyon that is mentioned in Lha

with the governor (*nang so*), sGar pa (Don yod rdo rje). He decided to interrupt his studies and went there to visit him.

> In a small tent, in the grove of the Shang guesthouse sat [gTsang smyon] naked, adorned with the six kinds of bone ornaments, beautiful and majestic. As soon as he met [gTsang smyon], a devotion and faith never previously experienced, limitless, deep and firm arose. Because of [gTsang smyon's] inexpressible meditative concentration, wisdom was born and [Lha btsun] was taken care of with love [by gTsang smyon].[1241]

At that time gTsang smyon gave instruction to his disciples and many famous learned teachers (*dge bshes*). Although Lha btsun had already received the teachings that gTsang smyon gave, gTsang smyon told him that he should listen one more time, since repetition is helpful. After about a month Lha btsun engaged in a religious debate and defeated everyone who debated with him. When Don yod rdo rje heard about Lha btsun's great debating skill and the depth of his learning he became very happy and said: "A son is born from a good father".[1242]

When it was time to leave, gTsang smyon asked Lha btsun if he wanted to follow him, but Lha btsun felt that he needed to continue the studies that he had interrupted. gTsang smyon said: "Study whatever mantra teaching you can without partiality to any particular tenets (*grub mtha'*). At some point you will feel disgust towards the appearances of this life; at that time, don't give in to the influence of circumstances but come to my place, [your] father."[1243] After having said this he gave [Lha btsun] two packets of tea and left.

Lha btsun continued his studies in bKra shis lhun po and other famous monasteries, and his learning developed even more.[1244] After some time one of his teachers, bDag po 'brug pa lha btsun pa, told him that he should go to gTsang smyon who he said had been Lha btsun's teacher in many previous lives.[1245] Lha btsun asked for permission to leave the monastery where he was studying, and went to visit his mother, after which he went to gTsang smyon. Lha btsun met gTsang smyon in rGyal po'i khab pho brang khyung

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btsun's *rnam mgur*, thus probably occurred around 1494–1495. This is confirmed in the *rnam mgur* of Lha btsun where gTsang smyon states that not more that eight years had passed since their previous meeting (*Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 293).

1241 *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 292: *shangs 'gron khang gi bskyed mo tshal du cog gra mdzad pa'i gzims gur gyi nang na / sku gcer bu rus pa'i rgyan drug gis mdzas shing brjid bag dang ldan par bzhugs 'dug pa la / zhal mjal ma thag tu mos gus sngar dang mi 'dra ba tshad med pa gting tsugs pa 'khrungs te / smra tu med pa'i ting nge 'dzin gyis thugs rgyud bltams shing brtse bas rjes su bzung /.*

1242 *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 292: *pha bzang la bu skyes pa yin.*

1243 *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 294: *grub mtha' la phyogs ris med pa'i sngags chos ci thob gyis / skabs cig tshe 'di'i sngang ba la skyug log pa cig yong bas de dus rkyen dbang du ma gtong bar / pha nga'i rtsar sleb pa gyis gsung ... /.*

1244 *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 294.

1245 *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 296.

rdzong dkar po and was lovingly taken care of by his lama.[1246] In the autumn they sustained themselves on flowers while practising, and in the winter they stayed in the sPrul sku pho brang in the glorious Chu bar.[1247] At that point Lha btsun realized that gTsang smyon, through his arduous practice in remote places and his disregard for worldly things such as food, clothes and talking, had obtained enlightenment in one single life-time.[1248]

In the winter about one hundred male and female yogins received instructions from gTsang smyon. gTsang smyon taught the assembled people about action, cause and result, and also instructed them in the Four Letter Mahāmudrā. To sixty especially fortunate disciples he gave direct instructions on the Six Dharmas of Nāropa based on his own experience. He also taught them yogic exercises. When spring came he granted the assembled disciples the complete reading transmission (*lung*) of the Aural Transmission of the Ḍākinīs.[1249]

After this, in the autumn, Lha btsun returned to his birthplace, Thang po che, to gather offerings. When the winter came, Lha btsun went to gTsang smyon again and offered him various offerings. For a period of seven months he stayed with gTsang smyon, who took care of him with love and gave him complete instructions (*bka' lung*).[1250] When staying with his guru he was without any fatigue and was unaffected by heat, cold, hunger or thirst, according to the text. Lha btsun held the instructions that he received as dearer to him than his own eyes and practised them earnestly. One time gTsang smyon held a roll of paper covered in brocade in his folded hands. Inside the roll were oral instructions and Lha btsun said that he needed to obtain them. "By all means I will give you all of them," gTsang smyon answered.[1251]

Then Lha btsun received "pointing out instructions" (*ngo sprod*) and after that he was given all the instructions of the uncommon Aural Transmission. Then gTsang smyon said:

[1246] *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 302.
[1247] *Life and songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 303. rGod tshang ras pa mentions that the son of a king, Lha btsun rin chen rnam rgyal had completed his studies of the Ri bo dga' ldan pa tradition in bKra shis lhun po and came at this time. After having received profound instructions from gTsang smyon he became his heart-son (*thugs sras*) (G: 198). This has sometimes been interpreted as if Lha btsun became gTsang smyon's disciple at this point (see, for example, Smith 2001: 66; Stearns [Kalnins] 1985: 37). But, as seen above, this assumption is not confirmed by the *Life and Songs of Lha btsun*. There is, however, no contradiction between rGod tshang ras pa's account and the account given in *Life and Songs of Lha btsun*, but what is stated in the texts is simply that it was at this point Lha btsun's status as an ordinary disciple changed, and he became gTsang smyon's heart-son, in other words he became one of his closest disciples.
[1248] *Life and songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 303.
[1249] *Life and songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 303.
[1250] *Life and songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 305.
[1251] *Life and songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 305: *cis kyang tshang ma ster gsung /*. A list of teachings that Lha btsun received from gTsang smyon follows on page 305–306.

"I, your father, have given you whatever instructions that I have without leaving anything out. Until I die don't tell them to anybody. Until three diseases of death arrive to you, don't discuss them with others. Then, spread them to the disciples with karma by whatever means" [gTsang smyon] said and bestowed a command seal (*bka' rgya*).[1252]

Lha btsun thus received complete transmission from gTsang smyon and became one of his most important lineage holders. Like his guru (gTsang smyon) and his dharma brother (rGod tshang ras pa), Lha btsun was a very prolific author, and he published no less than twenty-eight works, totaling over fifteen hundred folios.[1253] As has been mentioned, Lha btsun's main seat was Brag dkar rta so, a holy place where Milarepa had meditated, and rGod tshang ras pa's main seat was Ras chung phug. It was at these two places that most of their printing activities took place. While Lha btsun focused on songs, life stories and teachings derived from Milarepa, rGod tshang ras pa mainly devoted his time and energy to biographies, songs and teachings that came from Ras chung pa. Ras chung phug became the main center of the lineage of Ras chung. There rGod tshang ras pa compiled and printed extensive *rnam thar*s of Ras chung and focused his writing on the Aural Transmission lineages (*sNyan brgyud*). Lha btsun on the other hand mainly compiled and printed *rnam thar*s of Milarepa and wrote extensively on Mahāmudrā.[1254]

Lha btsun made new prints of the *rnam thar* and *mgur 'bum* of Milarepa that gTsang smyon had compiled in Brag dkar rta so.[1255] He also compiled two texts on Milarepa himself.[1256] These two texts are comprised of materials that were not included in gTsang smyon's famous compilations and bear the titles, *Six Vajra Songs and Other Miscellaneous Writings of the Oral Traditions of the Venerable Milarepa*[1257] and *The Uncommon Vajra Songs*.[1258] The

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[1252] *Life and songs of Lha btsun* 1976: 306: *khyod la pha nga'i gdam ngag gang yod lhag ma ma lus par byin pa yin pas / nga nam 'das kyi bar du su la'ang ma zer / de nas kyang khyod rang la 'chi ras pa'i na tsha gsum ma byung gi bar du mi gzhan la bgros ma gtong / de nas las can gyi slob ma la spel gang thub gyis gsung ba'i bka' rgyas btab bo /.*

[1253] Schaeffer, forthcoming.

[1254] It is important to note that this division was not an absolute one. rGod tshang ras pa printed a supplication to Milarepa that was written at Ras chung phuġ (*rJe btsun bzhad pa'i dro rje la gsol ba 'debs byin rlabs kyi gter*) for instance, and Lha btsun produced and printed *rnam thar*s of Ras chung pa at Brag dkar rta so as well. This being said, Lha btsun clearly focused on Milarepa and rGod tshang ras pa on Ras chung pa.

[1255] Schaeffer, forthcoming. Schaeffer mentions that no place or date are mentioned in the *rnam thar*, but he is almost certain that it is a Brag dkar rta so print.

[1256] It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to make a conclusive list of all Lha btsun's works, and a few examples will have to be enough. For more about Lha btsun's literary production, see the essays by Gene Smith and Kurtis Schaeffer. Smith enumerates and describes eight works by Lha btsun, and Schaeffer mentions more than twenty works (Smith 2001: 75–77; Schaeffer, forthcoming).

[1257] *rJe btsun mi la ras pa'i rdo rje'i mgur drug sogs gsung rgyun thor bu.*

former text has been translated in the two books *Drinking the Mountain Stream: Songs of Tibet's Beloved Saint Milarepa* and *Miraculous Journey: New Stories and Songs by Milarepa*.[1259] Smith states that Lha btsun made this supplementary compilation to complement the works of gTsang smyon.[1260] Lha btsun also composed a life story of Nāropa entitled *The Wondrous Life of Nāropa—Crown-Jewel of All Accomplished Scholars*.[1261] This particular text became well known in the West when Herbert V. Guenther translated it into English.[1262] Another work of Lha btsun that has also been translated is the songs of Ko rag pa bsod nams rgyal mtshan (1170–1249).[1263]

Besides hagiographies and song collections, Lha btsun wrote texts on Mahāmudrā. Three works of this kind are known.[1264] The longest is a fifty-folio commentary on the Four Letter Mahāmudrā titled: *A Commentary of the Four Letter Mahāmudrā which shows the Main Intention of Tantra*.[1265]

Following in the footsteps of gTsang smyon, Lha btsun also undertook a renovation of the Svayambhū Stūpa in Nepal. The stūpa had been damaged by invading Turks and needed to be repaired. Therefore, gTsang smyon appeared in a vision and requested Lha btsun to repair the Stūpa. Lha btsun complied with his guru's request and started the renovation in 1530. Probably due to meager funds he did not complete the renovation until almost ten years later.[1266]

The Life of bSod nams blo gros

There is also a life story about a lesser-known disciple of gTsang smyon named bSod nams blo gros (ca. 1460–1541). The name of this text is the *Life Story of the Learned and Accomplished Vajradhara bSod nams blo gros: The Bee of Faith Enjoying the Honey of Good Qualities*.[1267] The work was completed in 1544 and was written by Bya bral pa Tshul khrims dpal ldan.[1268] According to the *rnam thar*, bSod nams blo gros met gTsang smyon

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1258 *Thun mong ma yin pa rdo rje mgur*. Both these texts were printed in Brag dkar rta so and are available as microfilms in the archives of the NGMPP, reel no. L251/2 and L477/14. This is noted in Schaeffer, forthcoming.

1259 Kunga, Rinpoche and Cutillo, Brian (trans.) 1995 (1978); 1986.

1260 Smith 2001: 77.

1261 *mKhas grub kun kyi gtsug rgyan paṇ chen nāro pa'i rnam thar ngo mtshar sma 'byung*.

1262 Guenther 1986.

1263 *Khams gsum 'dran bral grub thob ko rag pa'i mgur 'bum* (*The Collected Songs of the Siddha Ko rag pa who is Unrivalled in the Three Realms*). English translaion in Stearns 2000.

1264 Schaeffer, forthcoming.

1265 *rGyud kyi dgongs pa gtsor ston pa phyag chen yi ge bzhi pa'i 'grel bshad* (Lha btsun 1561). None of these texts has, as far as I know, been studied or translated.

1266 This renovation is described in *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* and it is summarized in Rospatt 2001: 206–207.

1267 *mKhas grub rdo rje 'chang bsod nams blo gros kyi rnam thar yon tan gyi sbrang rtsi la dad pa'i bung ba rnam par rol pa*.

1268 Bya bral pa Tshul khrims dpal ldan 1544: 53b.

early in life.[1269] Having developed a strong urge to meet gTsang smyon who was known as the best of the great adepts (*grub thob chen po*) in Tibet,[1270] he decided to meet him. He received permission from his teacher to search for him, and eventually found gTsang smyon, who was practising asceticism with many yogin disciples in Mother Crystal Cave (Yum shel phug). bSod nams blo gros' devotion increased steadily while approaching the master, and his first audience with gTsang smyon is described as follows in the *rnam thar*:

> The Victorious One, the emanation of bZhad pa rdo rje,[1271] the great siddha, gTsang pa smyon pa was among many yogins that were adorned with heruka implements. [gTsang smyon was] adorned with the six bone ornaments [and his] body expressed the nine moods of dancing. [His] charisma and great splendor were overwhelming to behold. [gTsang smyon was] sitting in flickering clear light, and the meeting caused [bSod nams blo gro's] bodily hair to flutter. [He] could not utter a word; it was as if his body had been destroyed. In a state without thoughts, vivid and clear, he offered symbolic gifts...[1272]

bSod nams blo gros then established a close connection with gTsang smyon and became one of his most important disciples, but it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to describe his life in full.[1273]

The Life of Sha ra ba

Another important text is the life story of gTsang smyon's root lama, Sha ra Rab 'byams pa Sangs rgyas seng ge (Sha ra ba), which was completed in 1559. This text does not give much information about gTsang smyon, but since it gives information about Sha ra ba, his teachers, and his lineage, it is important.[1274] The *rnam thar* is based upon an older text by Zla ba rgyal

[1269] His first meeting and subsequent training with gTsang smyon is portrayed in Bya bral pa Tshul khrims dpal ldan 1544: 7a–10a.

[1270] Bya bral pa Tshul khrims dpal ldan 1544: 7b.

[1271] This is one of the names of Milarepa, and the text is thus yet another example showing that many of gTsang smyon's disciples regarded him to be an emanation of the cotton-clad yogin.

[1272] Bya bral pa Tshul khrims dpal ldan 1544: 8b–9a: *he ru ka'i cha byad can gyi rnal 'byor pa'i 'khor mang po'i dbus na / rgyal ba gzhad pa rdo rje rnam sprul / grub thob chen po gtsang pa smyon pa de sku gar dgu'i nyams dang ldan pa / rus pa'i rgyan drug gis mdzas pa / gzi brjid dang zil che ba lta bas mi bzad pa / 'od zer phrom me bzhugs pa dang mjal bas lus zhig 'gro ba lta bu'i ba spu g.yo zhing / ngag sgra brjod dang bral / sems rtog med du lhan lhan 'gro ba'i nang nas / phyag rten gyi rdzas rnams phul [...] /.*

[1273] Kurtis Schaeffer describes bSod nams blo gro's death scene, as it is depicted in the *rnam thar* by Bya bral Tshul khrim dpal ldan. Schaeffer 2007: 224.

[1274] The name of the life story is *mKhas grub sha ra rab 'jam ['byams] pa sangs rgyas seng ge'i rnam thar mthong ba don ldan ngo mtshar nor bu'i phreng ba shar 'dod yid 'phrog blo gsal mgul brgyan* (*The Life Story of the Learned and Accomplished Sha ra rab 'byams pa Sangs rgyas Seng ge: A Necklace of Appealing Clear Intelligence which Manifest the Needs*

mtshan that was composed in Dwags la sgam po, according to its colophon.[1275] The life story was later compiled and printed under the direction of a disciple of both rGod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun named Byams pa phun tshogs (1503–1581) in the village of gNas, in the Mang yul Gung thang region.[1276]

Sha ra ba was born in a place called Sha ra in 'Phan yul, northeast of Lhasa.[1277] His father's name was Rong rta dpon bsod, and his mother's name was sGrol ma. Sha ra ba belonged to the *khyung po* clan and he had five siblings. Like other great masters-to-be, his religious inclination amazed those who saw him, and when he was only three years old, he gave teachings.[1278] When he was older, a need to renounce samsara arose, and at thirteen Sha ra ba entered a monastic community. As a young monk, he studied the Buddhist teachings in a systematic and gradual way. Starting with the Tripiṭaka, Vinaya, Abhidharma and Sūtra, he soon mastered Pramāṇa and Madhyamaka, as well. Sha ra ba studied in different monastic institutions such as Se ra, gSang phu and 'Bras spung, and at twenty-five he entered the teaching convent of rTse thang. He steadily progressed in learning and finally reached the *rab 'byams* degree. From now on he became known as Sha ra rab 'byams pa and he became "as famous as the sun and the moon", to use the expression of the *rnam thar*.[1279]

It was at this point that Sha ra ba's link to the tantric teachings and the bKa' brgyud lineage started to manifest. He encountered several great teachers who gave empowerments (*dbang* and *rje snang*), reading transmissions (*lung*) and oral instructions (*khrid, gdams ngag*). Then he started to devote time to the practice of meditation in isolated retreats. Among the lamas Sha ra ba met, four became particularly important: Kun khyen gzhon nu blo gros;[1280] rJe btsun 'Dul 'dzin pa ngag gi dbang po; the twelfth abbot of sTag lung,[1281] sTag lung rin po che Ngag dbang grags pa (1418–1496); and mKhas grub bSod nams don grub.[1282]

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as a Wondrous Rosary of Jewels that is Meaningful to Behold). It is listed under Byams pa phun tshogs 1976 in the Bibliography.

1275 Byams pa phun tshogs 1976: 500.

1276 Byams pa phun tshogs 1976: 501. For information about Byams pa phun tshogs, see Ehrhard, forthcoming b.

1277 I have found two rnam thars of Sha ra ba, a short *rnam thar*, included in gTsang smyon's own *bDe mchog mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud* (gTsang smyon Heruka 1971, vol. 1: 111–113) and the more extensive one (26 folios) by Byams pa phun tshogs (Byams pa phun tshogs 1976).

1278 This and the following information about Sha ra ba are taken from Byams pa phun tshogs 1976: 453–466, if not otherwise indicated.

1279 Byams pa phun tshogs 1976: 457: *nyi ma dang zla ba ltar grags*.

1280 He is called lCang gling pa gZhon nu blo gros in gTsang smyon Heruka 1971, vol. 1: 112.

1281 Both Sha ra ba and gTsang smyon are mentioned by sTag lung Ngag dbang rnam rgyal 1992: 451. For a short genealogical description of the sTag lung pa school see: De Rossi Filibeck 1994: 237–240.

1282 sTag lung thang pa dPal ngag dbang grags pa (gTsang smyon 1971: 112) and sTag lung rin po che Ngag gi dbang po (Byams pa phun tshogs 1976: 466). The four main lamas of Sha ra ba are mentioned by Byams pa phun tshogs: (1976: 499).

From these and other teachers he received several different instructions that he later passed on to gTsang smyon. After receiving the tantric teachings Sha ra ba practised with great effort and quickly gained realization. The monk-scholar had become a tantric yogin, and he soon became famous and attracted disciples.

Other Sources

In addition to the persons that had a direct relationship with gTsang smyon it is also possible to find information about persons who were disciples or associates not of gTsang smyon, but of gTsang smyon's disciples and teachers. An interesting text of this kind is a *rnam thar* of the above-mentioned Byams pa phun tshogs. Franz-Karl Ehrhard has studied the text, and by means of texts such as these it is possible to see how a disciple of a disciple of gTsang smyon lived and practised.[1283] Ehrhard has also studied a *rnam thar* of Nam mkha' rdo rje (1486–1553) who is reported to have met gTsang smyon in the year 1504 when the mad yogin was on his way to Nepal to undertake the renovation of the Svayaṃbhū Stūpa. Nam mkha' rdo rje later received teachings from gTsang smyon's students Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal and 'Gro mgon blo gro rgya mtsho.[1284] The activities of gTsang smyon's disciples are also portrayed in a life story of Chos dbang rgyal mtshan (1484–1549). According to this text, Chos dbang rgyal mtshan received bKa' brgyud teachings from Lha btsun and Chos rje dBang phyug rgyal mtshan, in the winter 1537.[1285]

Information about gTsang smyon, his disciples and his tradition is also found in some historical texts written by people who belonged to his lineage. gTsang smyon's and Lha btsun's disciple, Sangs rgyas dar po, for instance, not only wrote the *rnam thar* about rGod tshang mgon po rdo rje that was referred to above, but in the year 1568 he also published an 87 folio history of the bKa' brgyud tradition.[1286] This important document ends with a chapter about gTsang smyon's lineage and it is an interesting description of how a member of the lineage presented this nowadays obscure tradition.[1287] A

[1283] See footnote 1205 above, for the title of the *rnam thar*. Ehrhard has studied the text, see Ehrhard 2004 b and Ehrhard forthcoming b.

[1284] Ehrhard 2000: 56–57.

[1285] Ehrhard 2000: 42–43. dBang phyug rgyal mtshan compiled life stories about Nāropa and Tilopa (dBang phug rgyal mtshan 1976).

[1286] *bDe gshegs bstan pa'i gsal byed bka' rgyud chos kyi 'byung gnas rin po ches spung pa'i mun sel 'od stong 'khyil ba* (*A Religious History of the bKa' brgyud [tradition which is an] Elucidation of the Teachings of the Sugata: A Heap of Gems with a Swirling Thousand Lights*) NGMPP reel no. L392/14.

[1287] gTsang smyon's lineage is presented at the end of the text (Sangs rgyas dar po 1568: 76b–83a). Unfortunately the copy in the NGMPP archives is very difficult to read. Peter Alan Roberts has also studied this text but he used another copy of this rare text, a copy that he obtained from the collection of Gene Smith (Roberts 2007: 47–50). Hopefully this copy is in better condition.

later important text that should be mentioned is a history of Brag dkar rta so that was written in the early 19th century by the hermitage's most prominent historian, Brag dkar rta so Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775–1837).[1288] This text describes how gTsang smyon's disciple, Lha btsun established a printing house at this holy place that was later renovated by Karma blo bzang in the 17th or 18th century.[1289]

gTsang smyon is also mentioned in some other life stories composed by people who did not belong to his tradition, and these references could be used to compare and check information given in texts produced within "gTsang smyon's school". There are several examples of texts where brief references to gTsang smyon are made. In some of the autobiographies and biographies of the mad yogin 'Brug pa kun legs, a meeting with gTsang smyon is reported, for example, but such a meeting is not mentioned in the *rnam thars* about gTsang smyon.[1290] gTsang smyon is also mentioned, along with dBus smyon and 'Brug smyon, in a list of the Seventh Karmapa's—Chos grags rgya mtsho (1451–1502)—disciples that is included in *rnam thars* about him.[1291] A brief meeting between gTsang smyon and the Karmapa is mentioned in the *Heart of the Sun*.[1292] The fame and influence of gTsang smyon are shown in various ways also in other texts made outside of "the School of gTsang smyon". For example, the rNying ma master Zhabs dkar (1781–1851) from A mdo endeavored to visit a place where gTsang smyon had meditated during one of his pilgrimages. Zhabs dkar did this in order to establish a connection with "the great siddha" according to Zhabs dkar's autobiography. This shows us that gTsang smyon was respected centuries after his death.[1293]

In a guide to the sKu 'bum mthong ba rang grol stūpa in Sikkim written by Lha btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med (1597–1653) it is mentioned that the loincloths (*ang ra*) of gTsang smyon and dBus smyon were among the many consecrated substances (*dam rdzas*) and blessing bestowing objects of worship (*rten byin brlabs can*) inside the stūpa.[1294] gTsang smyon is sometimes mentioned in Tibetan guidebooks that were written for pilgrims, and some of these books have been studied and/or translated. 'Bri gung gdan rab bsTan 'dzin chos kyi blo gros wrote two guidebooks more than hundred years ago. In 1896 he wrote a guide to Ti se, and in 1901 one to La phyi.[1295] In the gui-

1288 Brag dkar rta so sPrul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug 1816.
1289 Schaeffer, forthcoming.
1290 See, for example, Dowman and Paljor 1983: 110.
1291 See, for instance, dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba, 2006: 568.
1292 G: 214.
1293 Ricard et al. 1997: 447.
1294 Martin 1994: 298.
1295 The names of the two texts are: *Gangs ri chen po ti se dang mcho ma dros pa bdas kyi sngon byung gi lo rgyus mdor bdus su brjod pa'i rab byed sel dkar melong* and *gSang lam sgrub pa'i gnas chen nyer bzhi'i ya rgyal gōdavari 'am 'brog la phyi gangs kyi ra ba'i sngon byung gi chul las rim pa'i gtam gyi phyed pa nyung du rnam gsal*. These texts have been

debook to Ti se it is mentioned that there were statues of gTsang smyon in 'Dzu 'phrul phug.[1296] In the book about La phyi several caves where gTsang smyon had meditated are referred to, and it is also mentioned that there were statues of him in caves.[1297] In another guidebook to Crystal Peak in Western Nepal it is mentioned that gTsang smyon performed a miracle and left a footprint in a rock.[1298] As mentioned, gTsang smyon is also referred to in mKhyen brtse's guide to the holy places of central Tibet and in Situ Chos kyi rgya mtsho's guidebook. In both cases gTsang smyon is mentioned in connection with Ras chung phug in Yar lung.[1299]

It is noteworthy that most references to gTsang smyon are produced by his disciples and supporters. It would be interesting to read more critical accounts, which disagree with, or at least moderates the panegyric voices of his devotees. It is possible that critical, or more neutral, accounts of gTsang smyon exist. Given his outrageous behavior and provocations, it would be reasonable to assume that there were persons who disliked and condemned him. Such characters are present in some sections of the *rnam thars* that his disciples wrote, but since it is gTsang smyon who is the "saint" of the story; his antagonists are proven wrong and they are portrayed in a negative way.[1300]

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presented in transliteration with a summarized translation in Filibeck 1988. For an analytical commentary on the guidebook to La phyi, a translation of sections of it and related oral sources, see Huber 1997. Toni Huber and Tsepak Rigzin have also translated and commented upon the guidebook to Ti se, see Huber and Rigzin 1995.

1296 De Rossi Filibeck 1988: 84.

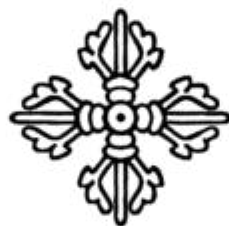
1297 De Rossi Filibeck 1988: 162, 163, 166.

1298 This guidebook is translated in Kapstein 1997: 103–119.

1299 mKhyen rtse's guidebook is translated in Ferrari 1958: 51.

1300 rGod tshang ras pa mentions that a local lama of La phyi once disliked gTsang smyon's planned stay in the area. The lama thought that it would be a serious obstacle if the mad yogin stayed in a cave above theirs (G: 158). On another occasion, an abbot in Ding ri bla skor became very upset when he found a statue of gTsang smyon on the shrine of a local artist. The abbot warned the artist who had made it that he had committed a negative action greater than destroying a shrine in creating the statue. He then abused and soiled the statue of gTsang smyon (G: 165–166).

Conclusions



Chapter 10: Conclusions

The hagiographies of gTsang smyon Heruka depict a person who seems to have been quite famous and influential in Tibet and elsewhere, both during and after his life-time. Nowadays, his legacy mainly continues through his own and his disciples' literary efforts which, contrary to his persona and transmission lineage, have continued to receive much attention.[1301] The texts that were produced and printed by "the School of gTsang smyon" have continued to spread his message in the world. gTsang smyon's agenda seems to have been to promote a more ascetic and meditative way for Buddhist practitioners. Instead of the monk-scholar, it was the yogin, and particularly the accomplished one—the siddha—that was his ideal. By means of compiling, printing and distributing life stories, gTsang smyon and his disciples promoted sides of Buddhism that sometimes tend to be forgotten, namely renunciation and meditation practice. Moreover they emphasized that it was possible to obtain enlightenment by means of advanced tantric practice.

There is often a critique of scholar-monks (*dge bshes*) in both the life stories that gTsang smyon wrote/compiled and in the *rnam thar*s about him. This critique should not be misunderstood, however. It is important to remember that gTsang smyon is presented as a scholar with a monastic background. Also his teacher, Sha ra rab 'byams pa, is portrayed as having been a monk-scholar before embarking upon the path of a tantric yogin, and we have seen that gTsang smyon encouraged his disciple, Lha btsun, to study in famous non-bKa' brgyud institutions. The critique is thus not aimed at studies and monasticism as such, but at the tendency among some monks to ne-

[1301] gTsang smyon's lineage and person have not disappeared completely, however. When I visited Tibet in 2006 I heard about a master named Ngag dbang don grub who had passed away in 2003 (not far from gTsang smyon's birthplace in mKhar kha). According to some monks of dPal 'khor chos sde, this master was considered to be an emanation (*sprul pa*) of gTsang smyon. Moreover, a seventy-three year old monk whom I met in a village below Ras chung phug told me that the ninth incarnation (*sprul sku*) of gTsang smyon, 'Jam dpal kun bzang nam sprul rgya mtsho, recently passed away in Gro mo, a county situated close to the Sikkimese and Bhutanese border. I also recently found out that a lama named Byang gling Rinpoche who lives in Nepal belongs to an incarnation line which is linked to gTsang smyon. The first Byang gling incarnation was a student of rGod tshang ras pa named rGod phrug pa Sangs rgyas rdo rje, and he was believed to be an incarnation of gTsang smyon (http://lotusspeach.org.au/teachers/). gTsang smyon's lineage was also upheld by the great *ris med* master mKhyen rtse dbang po (1820–1892) and another *ris med* master, 'Jam mgon kong sprul, included some texts from gTsang smyon's lineage in his *Treasury of Oral Instructions* collection (*gDams ngag mdzod*).

glect practice and engage in worldly pursuits. gTsang smyon, as he is presented by his disciples, does in fact seem to claim that monasticism and studies are necessary foundations for tantric practice. According to the *rnam thars*, the scholar-monks with whom gTsang smyon sometimes debated misused Buddhism and failed to see gTsang smyon's qualities. What appears to have been debated between gTsang smyon and the *dge bshes* concerned how and when certain tantric practices should be carried out. The *rnam thars* about gTsang smyon include several episodes where learned scholars, often *dge bshes*, questioned his behavior and way of dressing. They said that his way of practising did not correspond with the Buddhist teachings. gTsang smyon surprised his antagonists by giving precise and accurate explanations, and he often quoted appropriate texts at length. According to the life stories, the *dge bshes* were thus not as learned as gTsang smyon, and while the scholars who questioned him ended up speechless and embarrassed, those who witnessed the encounters were impressed and filled with faith in gTsang smyon. Besides showing that gTsang smyon's learning exceeded that of everyone else the authors of the *rnam thars* also depict him as the yogin par excellance. The texts describe how gTsang smyon meditated for years in remote caves just like Milarepa, and indeed, he so thoroughly identified himself with the cotton-clad yogin, that he eventually came to be regarded as his emanation.

This leads us to another important facet of gTsang smyon, namely his promotion of ancient bKa' brgyud doctrines, practices and ideals. gTsang smyon appears to have been a bKa' brgyud purist who avoided mixing the bKa' brgyud lineage that he practised and disseminated with other lineages. His faithfulness to the tradition of Milarepa, which he had received from his root-lama Sha ra rab 'byams pa, is exemplified by his overt interest in the life stories and the Aural Transmissions of the early bKa' brgyud masters. Milarepa's disciple Ras chung pa had an important place in the Aural Transmissions of the bKa' brgyud tradition, and he differs from Milarepa's today more famous disciple sGam po pa in several ways. While sGam po pa is portrayed as a learned and well-disciplined bKa' gdams pa monk, Ras chung pa is presented as a lay tantric yogin, and his rebelliousness is often stressed. Although it is sGam po pa's version of the bKa' brgyud that became successful and was spread through Tibet and elsewhere, Ras chung pa and other lay tantric yogins could arguably be seen as being closer to the founders of the tradition. sGam po pa blended the monastic bKa' gdams tradition with its emphasis on mind training and sūtric Mahāyāna Buddhism with the tantric yogic teachings of Milarepa. Ras chung pa, on the other hand, appears to have continued to practise the tantric and yogic teachings of Milarepa without mixing them with teachings taken from other lineages, and like Milarepa, he is portrayed as being uninterested in monasticism and institutions. While the four "greater" and eight "lesser" bKa' brgyud schools that derived from sGam po pa's disciples became institutionalized and widely

disseminated, Ras chung's transmission lineage remained obscure and un-institutionalized. It seems that gTsang smyon wanted to revive this alternative, and arguably more original, bKa' brgyud lineage with its focus on yogic practice and wilderness retreats. At the same time gTsang smyon seems to have been aware of the importance of receiving acceptance and support from the institutionalized bKa' brgyud branches. He therefore appears to have downplayed the polemic and problematic sides of the early bKa' brgyud masters. This was perhaps a part of the secret behind the success of the life stories that gTsang smyon and his disciples composed. Their life stories were close to the life of ordinary people and at the same time possible for the monastic orders to accept. gTsang smyon's ability to balance between the provocative and the normative is mirrored both in his religious and his worldly activities. It is to the latter that we will now turn.

The general situation in Tibet, both during and directly after gTsang smyon's life-time (when the *rnam thar*s about him were composed), is an important factor that should be taken into consideration when studying his life. Although this study has focused on how religious/Buddhist practices and doctrines can explain gTsang smyon's mad way of conduct, the socio-political situation should also be considered when trying to understand his "madness". Tibet was fragmented during the 15th and 16th centuries, and many conflicts and wars were going on. At the same time this was a dynamic and creative period when many different forms of Buddhism co-existed and influenced one another. Religion, art, architecture and literature flourished, and gTsang smyon was involved in many cultural enterprises. He skillfully utilized his position as a mad yogin, and he seems to have been able to remain outside of both religious and political factions. This in turn enabled him to act independently and avoid becoming involved in religious and political conflicts. gTsang smyon's position seems to have implied a freedom of movement and expression that he put to good use. The hagiographies describe how he, by means of outrageous behavior and a display of miraculous powers, obtained patronage from many different leaders and support from various Buddhist traditions. It is an interesting paradox that an outsider who promoted asceticism, renunciation and meditation had so many patrons and supporters. According to the life stories, he was supported by bKra shis dar rgyas of Bya yul; Don yod rdo rje of Rin spungs (and indeed of large parts of Tibet); dPal 'byor rgyal po of sNe'u rdzong; Nam mkha' stob rgyal of Tsha mda'; Nam mkha' rdo rje of Lha stod byang; the king of Kathmandu, Ratnamalla; the ruler of gLo bo smon thang, bKra shis mgon; the king of Gung thang, Khri rnam rgyal lde; his two sons, prince Nor bu lde and prince bSam grub lde; and others.

gTsang smyon's position as a mad yogin seems to have made it possible for him both to express criticism and to remain neutral without getting into trouble. According to the life stories, he sometimes acted as a mediator in conflicts and thereby managed to reconcile rival disputing parties and also

avoid wars. At other times he boldly criticized leaders who he thought had acted wrongly. Apparently it was both accepted and expected that a mad yogin was outspoken and honest. It appears to have been an integral part of his role to transgress social, political and religious boundaries, and this enabled him to do and say things that others could not do and say.

The life of a mad yogin thus involved certain advantages in 15^{th}–16^{th} century Tibet. While the scholar-monks were geographically and historically linked with particular places and rulers, the wandering mad yogins were more flexible. According to the hagiographies gTsang smyon obtained support and patronage from several different leaders, although many of these leaders were in conflict with one another. The wandering life-style of the mad yogins made it possible for them to move to other places if wars and conflicts afflicted a certain area, and having several patrons meant that if one patron lost his power and influence they could go to another. Moreover, since monasteries and property could be coveted, confiscated, or perhaps destroyed by hostile or envious competitors, the possession of monasteries and property could lead to problems and dangers.[1302] A mad yogin also followed a different discipline and was therefore not bound by the monastic rules of conduct. He or she could therefore talk and act in ways that were not allowed for the monks. At times, this difference could perhaps also be an advantage.

The life stories of gTsang smyon show how his provocative and mad behavior was performed in a deliberate and strategic way. gTsang smyon displayed "madness" to reasons similar to why he displayed miraculous powers, namely to impress and convert others. It is interesting that this rather unusual conversion strategy often worked. gTsang smyon constantly gained new followers and patrons as a result of his mad behavior. It is evident that gTsang smyon's provocative and crazy behavior was performed when many people had gathered. He repeatedly acted as a madman in front of important kings and leaders when they had gathered together with many followers and spectators. "Disciplined conduct" was a social event and his spectacular behavior made him famous. It is noteworthy that mad practices sometimes are performed in the rNying ma tradition under quite different circumstances. Instead of acting like a madman in public, the rNying ma pa yogin who practises the extraordinary preliminary practices that lead to "direct transcendence" (*thod rgal*), behaves as if mad within a communal retreat

[1302] An example of this is found in the life story of the mad yogin 'Brug pa kun legs. According to his life story, 'Brug pa kun legs had seen how possessions and position caused problems and disasters around him. His father, who was a governor (*nang so*), had been killed in a conflict, and then when he served the leader of the Rin spungs estate, Kun tu bzang po, he again witnessed war and conflicts. 'Brug pa kun legs became depressed and when he was requested to stay at Ra lung he declined and said that dealing with possessions in these degenerate times leads to disaster in the short run and to hell in the long run. Instead, he became a wandering mad yogin ('Brug pa kun legs 2005: 5; Stein 1972: 43–44).

setting, and under the close guidance of a spiritual guide.[1303] gTsang smyon on the other hand, acted mad in public, and people who had witnessed his outrageous behavior and his bizarre way of dressing did not forget him. For example, rGod tshang ras pa heard about gTsang smyon from a tea-merchant who had encountered a yogin named gTsang smyon who wore a human skin when he was in Lhasa. This report made the eight-year-old rGod tshang ras pa curious. Due to his karmic link with gTsang smyon he became filled with faith, and a wish to meet with the mad yogin in person arose. Not unlike some present-day artists who become famous by dressing and acting in unusual and shocking ways, gTsang smyon became famous and obtained patronage and supporters as a result of his mad and transgressive actions. It is interesting that gTsang smyon's "madness" often gave rise to faith and devotion among the people who witnessed it. This indicates that Tibetans in the 15th and 16th centuries were aware of, and prepared for, mad behavior by Buddhist masters. The fact that gTsang smyon's disciples wrote about these crazy activities in the hagiographies, and the fact that the epithet "mad" is used for him and other masters almost like an honorific title, show that the Tibetans believed that a great master may act as if mad.

Another factor that also seems to be at work is the hope and fear that people felt when they encountered a mad yogin. According to the life stories, people became rewarded with riches and fortune as a result of showing respect and having faith in gTsang smyon, while the consequences of not respecting him could be fatal. People who encountered a mad yogin thus had much to win if they showed him respect, and they had much to lose if they did not.

Despite the importance of social and political aspects, this dissertation has focused upon how the transgressive, provocative, and outright crazy ways of the mad yogins could be explained by means of Buddhist doctrines and/or practices. There are several examples in the life stories that show how gTsang smyon referred to tantric Buddhist doctrines and practices when his unusual behavior was questioned. In these tantric texts it is explained how, by whom, when, and why, a transgressive and seemingly mad practice should be carried out. What at first glance seems to be a spontaneous, haphazard, and uncontrolled conduct is thus actually a particular Buddhist practice—a practice, which should only be undertaken by the right person, at the right time, in the right way and for the right reasons. Otherwise, the result will be disastrous, both for the practitioner and for others, according to the tantric exegetes. The practices that the mad yogins performed are explained in great detail in the Mahāyoga and Yoginītantras (which the Tibetans refer to as Anuttarayogatantras) and their commentaries. These types of tantras were incorporated into the newer Tibetan schools (*gsar ma*) to which the bKa' brgyud tradition belongs.

[1303] For a description of these practices, see Germano 1997: 311–334.

The most commonly used terms for practices that involve transgressive and sometimes crazy behavior are *vrata* (*brtul zhugs*) and *caryā* (*spyod pa*), often combined as *vratacaryā* (*brtul zhugs spyod pa*). There is a precise description of what inner realizations a yogin must have attained before undertaking these practices, and it is prescribed how such a person should dress and act. A practitioner "enters into the conduct" (*spyod pa la 'jug pa*) when he has reached the second of the five paths—"the path of connection" (*sbyor lam*). The inner sign that indicates that he has obtained this level of realization is that he experiences "warmth" (*drod*) and another sign of having reached this attainment is that the yogin no longer cares about the eight worldly dharmas. According to the hagiographies about gTsang smyon, his first display of unconventional and "mad" conduct already occurred while he was studying with Sha ra rab 'byams pa, and it was preceded by an experience of "warmth". It is also often stressed that he did not care about the eight worldly concerns. Tantric exegetes, moreover, often stress that a practitioner who aspires to perform these practices must have compassion, a firm background in basic Buddhism, and have kept the *prātimokṣa* vows, the Bodhisattva vows and especially the tantric commitments (*samaya*). Tantric exegetes thus emphasize that the mad conduct is a part of "normative" Buddhism.

The mad yogins of Tibet are often called *grub thob* (siddha), and given their close resemblance to the Indian siddhas, the designation is indeed suitable. Many of the Indian siddhas behaved in unconventional ways, and like the mad yogins of Tibet, they practised and disseminated the Anuttarayogatantras. These tantras are generally centered on a particular type of wrathful deities called *herukas*. gTsang smyon's practice was focused on two such wrathful deities, namely Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara. Hevajra was his main *yidam* (*iṣṭadevatā*), and he devoted much of his time and energy to compiling and disseminating the Aural Transmission of Cakrasaṃvara. Buddhist Tantric practice involves the visualization of tantric deities and recitation of mantras. There are two phases of tantric sādhana meditation, the generation and the completion phases. During the first phase the practitioner visualizes, and gradually attempts to identify himself with the tantric deity (*yidam*), which in gTsang smyon's case was Hevajra. When the completion stage practices occur, the yogin is no longer supposed to have any notion of being separated from his *yidam*. In fact, tantric exegetes claim that the *yidam* and the practitioner have always been inseparably united, but due to his ignorance the practitioner has been unaware of this. The practice is thus a means to realize that the practitioner has lived in a deluded state of mind and then to transform this deluded state into a non-deluded, or awakened state. The *yidam* is an expression of awakened mind, and there are peaceful, as well as wrathful *yidams*. The heruka is a wrathful *yidam*, but ultimately every expression of awakening is the same, regardless of how different they may appear. gTsang smyon's *yidam* was Hevajra, and Hevajra is a heruka, so

when gTsang smyon became enlightened he realized or discovered his own mind as Hevajra/heruka.

It is somewhat paradoxical that the seemingly undisciplined and uncontrolled behavior of the mad yogin is actually prescribed in the tantras and thus is a type of "disciplined conduct" (*vratacaryā*). A yogin who practises "disciplined conduct" is supposed to act without restraint and say and do whatever appears in his mind.[1304] Such a practitioner should not show any preferences concerning what is suitable or unsuitable, pure or impure, good or bad, and so forth, but completely let go of all dualistic and self-centered ideas. In this way, he displays his realization of the empty nature of all phenomena. Experiencing everything as "one taste", the yogin realizes that samsara is nirvana. This realization enables the practitioner to do things that would be disastrous for an ordinary person. When gTsang smyon was about twenty years old he had a transformative visionary encounter with his *yidam* Hevajra which inspired him to behave in unconventional and provocative ways. Since his "crazy" ways were unsuitable for a monk, he left his monastery. It is stressed in the *rnam thars* that he had mastered basic Buddhism, Mahāyāna and Mantrayāna completely at this point, and it is also stated that he was extremely learned.

Later he went to Tsāri where he received the four empowerments in their entirety from Hevajra in another visionary encounter. On that occasion Hevajra gave him his secret name Khrag thung rgyal po—"king of the blood drinkers"—a Tibetan translation of heruka. gTsang smyon was now an "enlightened" siddha and a heruka. His status as a heruka had been confirmed by the visions, and his new status was displayed outwardly by the way he dressed and acted. He adorned himself with the "six heruka bone ornaments"; carried a tantric staff (*khaṭvāṅga*), and a skull-cup (*kapāla*); and practised "disciplined conduct" (*brtul zhugs spyod pa*). According to the *rnam thars*, he did this for the sake of benefiting the doctrine and the living beings.

Following these transformative experiences, during a period of about ten years, gTsang smyon repeatedly acted in very provocative and "crazy" ways. He stayed at cemeteries, draped himself in intestines, ate from leprous corpses, destroyed religious ceremonies, took the beverages of kings and leaders from their hands and drank it, insulted people, threw around urine and feces, drank his own urine, and sexually assaulted people, and so forth. As seen above, it is possible to explain even such antinomian and transgressive acts by means of Buddhist doctrines and practices. Unconventional and apparently mad ways of conduct could be associated both with the path towards accomplishment and also with the goal, namely accomplishment itself. "Disciplined conduct" could be applied by the advanced tantric practi-

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[1304] Whether the tantras are to be interpreted symbolically or not is, of course, a debated and problematic issue.

tioner to enhance his progress upon the path towards awakening, and when the goal has been attained, the practitioner resembles a mad person insofar that his perception of the world is completely different from that of an ordinary person. An enlightened master no longer perceives things in a dualistic and self-centered manner, and might therefore appear to be mad in the eyes the world.

It is also noteworthy that the antinomian and transgressive actions that gTsang smyon performed are possible to explain with the help of Mahāyāna doctrines. The disciples of gTsang smyon repeatedly emphasize that he never harmed others, but that all his actions, however bizarre and shocking they may appear, always benefited sentient beings and the Buddhist teachings. gTsang smyon's mad ways are described as a method (*thabs*) that enabled him to help beings of a rough nature who would never have listened to traditional Buddhist teachings. When attacked by angry people he shed tears, not because of personal pain, but out of compassion for the people who assaulted him. When he met traders who had captured a woman and her daughters whom they were about to sell, he felt intense compassion, bought them free, and escorted them back to their homes. Thu'u bkwan bLo bzang Chos kyi nyi ma states that although gTsang smyon abided in "disciplined conduct" and was a siddha who controlled all outer appearances his wisdom-mind was filled only with love and compassion whenever he encountered an unfortunate being who suffered, or someone who had accumulated negative karma. gTsang smyon made the suffering beings the principal focus of his practice, and although gTsang smyon had attained an exalted level of accomplishment, he strongly emphasized the importance of karma and its result. Thu'u' bkwan moreover states, that gTsang smyon considered even the smallest virtuous or harmful action to be of the utmost importance, and that this was what he always taught his disciples.[1305]

Sometimes it appears to have been a conscious strategy of gTsang smyon to shock people in order to "wake them up" from their ignorance. Although Buddhist masters are sometimes seen as cozy figures who do whatever is needed to make people comfortable and happy, it is important to remember that Buddhism aims at "waking" people up, and if people are "sleeping" deeply it might be impossible to wake them up without employing unusual and perhaps even uncomfortable methods. These kinds of unexpected and shocking actions are found in several Buddhist traditions; the Chan (Zen) and siddha traditions in particular abound in them. Chan masters sometimes employed eccentric and even antinomian pedagogical techniques in their attempts to liberate their disciples from false dualistic perceptions of reality. The Chan master Mazu (707–786), for example, grabbed the nose of his disciple Baizhang (749–814) and twisted it until the latter reached enlight-

[1305] T: 44.

enment.[1306] Another famous mad Chan monk, Daoji alias Jidian (Crazy Ji) or Jigong (1150–1209) became famous for constantly eating meat and drinking large quantities of alcohol. Daoji liked to somersault and when so doing he sometimes revealed his private parts. Shahar cites the following episode of his life which displays his unconventional behavior.

> [The abbot] said: "Is there anyone in this assembly who remembers what happens at the moment [of enlightenment]?" Daoji happened to be washing in the bathhouse next door and he overheard the question. "I understand this," he said to himself. Hurriedly he fastened his bathrobe, threw on his cassock, and rushed into the Assembly Hall. Pressing his palms together in salute to the master, he said: "I remember what happens at that moment."
>
> The abbot said: "Since you know, why not reveal it in front of the whole assembly." Then and there Daoji somersaulted in front of the dharma seat, revealing that thing that he had in front. The monks covered their mouths and burst out laughing.[1307]

The Indian siddha Nāropa had to undergo a series of seemingly meaningless trials for twelve years while following his guru Tilopa. Then, suddenly, Tilopa hit Nāropa on his forehead with his shoe and Nāropa fainted. "When he came to, all the qualities of his teacher's wisdom mind had arisen within him. Teacher and disciple had become one in realization."[1308]

Nāropa passed on his tradition to the Tibetan translator Marpa who transmitted it to Milarepa. Milarepa similarly had to undergo several seemingly meaningless and demanding trials before Marpa would instruct him. Since this is the very tradition that gTsang smyon inherited from Sha ra rab 'byams pa, it is perhaps logical that he acted as he did. In many ways he resembles the early bKa' brgyud masters much more than do sGam po pa and other bKa' brgyud dignitaries. It is, however, important to remember that it was gTsang smyon and his disciples who wrote down and printed many of the well-known hagiographies about the Indian siddhas and their Tibetan heirs. This makes it difficult to separate gTsang smyon and his disciples (who compiled the stories) from Milarepa, Marpa, Nāropa, and the other masters (who are depicted in them).

This study has tried to show that the mad behavior of the Tibetan yogin gTsang smyon Heruka can be explained with the help of Buddhist doctrines and practices. Seen from the most ancient Indian perspective, he was a great ascetic and homeless wanderer, akin to Indian ascetics and proto śaiva figures that have been attested in India long before Buddhism arose. Seen from an ancient Buddhist perspective, he could be likened to the ascetic monks

1306 Shahar 1998: 32.
1307 Shahar 1998: 61–62.
1308 Patrul Rinpoche 1994: 159, dPal sprul rin po che 2004: 251: *brgyal sangs pa dang bla ma'i thugs rgyud kyi yon tan thams cad nā ro pa'i rgyud la skyes nas dpon slob gnyis dgongs pa dbyer med du gyur nas 'dug.*

who adhered to the *dhutaguṇa* practices, and in some ways he even resembles Buddha Śākyamuni. Both gTsang smyon and the Buddha were homeless wanderers and meditators. Another similarity between them is that they were supported by powerful rulers; the Buddha was supported by the rulers who gave the Sangha land, and gTsang smyon by Don yod rdo rje, bKra shis dar rgyas and others. Their position was thus paradoxical; at the same time as they were ascetic outsiders, they were influential and well-connected religious leaders. Seen from a Mahāyāna perspective, gTsang smyon was a bodhisattva who acted in a completely selfless manner. Having realized the emptiness of self and phenomena, he was able to work solely for the sake of the Buddhist doctrine and sentient beings. In particular, from a Vajrayāna perspective, he could be seen as a tantric siddha who practised the advanced Buddhist tantras.

Finally it should be emphasized that trickster-like mad masters are nothing unique to Tibetan Buddhism. Similar figures are not only found in other forms of Buddhism, but can be observed in many different religions. Even in the Bible we find how the apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians says that:

> We are fools for Christ's sake, while you are such sensible Christians. We are weak; you are so powerful. We are in disgrace; you are honored. To this day we go hungry and thirsty and in rags; we are roughly handled; we wander from place to place (1 Cor. 4:10–11).[1309]

These words by Paul could be used to justify a mad conduct among Christians, and the most poignant example are probably "the holy fools" or "fools for the sake of Christ" in Russian Orthodox Christianity. Ewa M. Thompson writes that before the October Revolution, the population of practically every sizable Russian town included a strange-looking person called *iurodivyi* (holy fool). These holy fools were the wards of the town, and people gave them food and shelter. "In exchange for their kindness, the holy fool often abused his benefactors, or at best treated them with indifference," Thompson continues.[1310] The holy fools were naked or dressed in strange garments. They were dirty and often covered their bodies with bells, strings, and other things that made them look peculiar. Thompson also mentions that their proper element was not hermitages and solitude, but a neighborhood gathering or a marketplace; "In such surroundings they shouted, cried, abused the passers-by and prophesied."[1311]

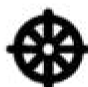
Neither the mad Buddhist yogins nor the holy madmen of other religions fit into the conventional picture of a religious and holy figure. They act inappropriately, they mock others, and they puzzle and surprise us with their

[1309] *The New English Bible: New Testament* 1964: 273.
[1310] Thompson 1987: 1.
[1311] Thompson 1987: 2.

strange ways and transgressive behavior. At first glance, the mad masters do not seem to fit in with the religions to which they nevertheless are affiliated. But could it perhaps be the other way around? Do they represent something fundamental, rather than peripheral in religion? These figures are interesting since they challenge our preconceptions about Buddhism and about religion. Instead of giving us simple answers and a nice coherent picture, they challange us to broaden our minds and change our narrow perspectives and preconceived ideas about religion in general and Buddhism in particular. Perhaps Buddhism is not what we have thought it to be? Perhaps religion is not what we have thought it to be? Maybe samsara is nirvana?

A figure like gTsang smyon not only challenges our picture of Buddhism and of religion, he also raises a more general question about who is mad and who is not. From the perspective of the mad yogin, it is other people who are mad. In our madness we mistake the mad yogins for being insane, when they are actually quite sane. gTsang smyon once received the following question from a Buddhist master he met:

> "I heard that there is a mad vagabond (*bya bral smyon pa*) around. Are you he?"
>
> "There are different ways of looking at it; the way I look at it you are the one who is mad. [...] For achieving buddhahood in this life [I] am called crazy." [gTsang smyon] said.
>
> [Hearing gTsang smyon's answer], everyone burst into laughter and went away.[1312]



[1312] For the citation in full, and the Tibetan text, see above, p 145.

Illustrations

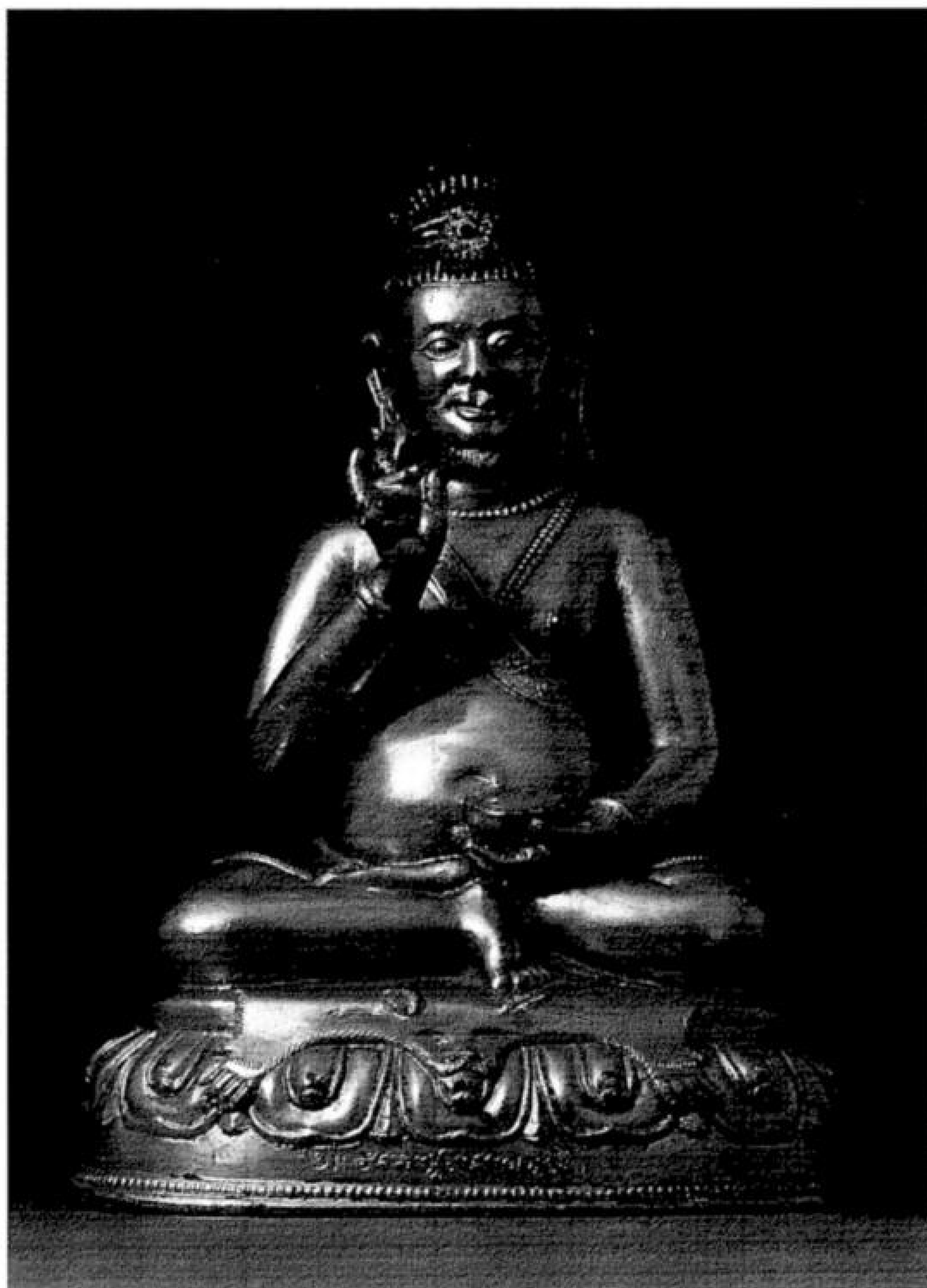


Figure 1. Statue of gTsang smyon Heruka, 17th century. (c) Reproduced with permission, *Portraits of the Masters*, Serindia Publications and Oliver Hoare Ltd. Dinwiddie (ed.) 2003: 156.



Figure 2. A recently made statue of gTsang smyon Heruka, Ras chung phug (photo: Stefan Larsson).



Figure 3. Hevajra, the main meditation deity (*yi dam*) of gTsang smyon Heruka, Gong dkar chos sde (photo: Stefan Larsson).



Figure 4. Nāropa the Indian siddha and lineage holder of the bKa' brgyud tradition, sKu 'bum mchod rten, rGyal rtse (photo: Stefan Larsson).



Figure 5. gTsang smyon's great source of inspiration, Milarepa, whose tradition he both followed and propagated, sKu 'bum mchod rten, rGyal rtse (photo: Stefan Larsson).

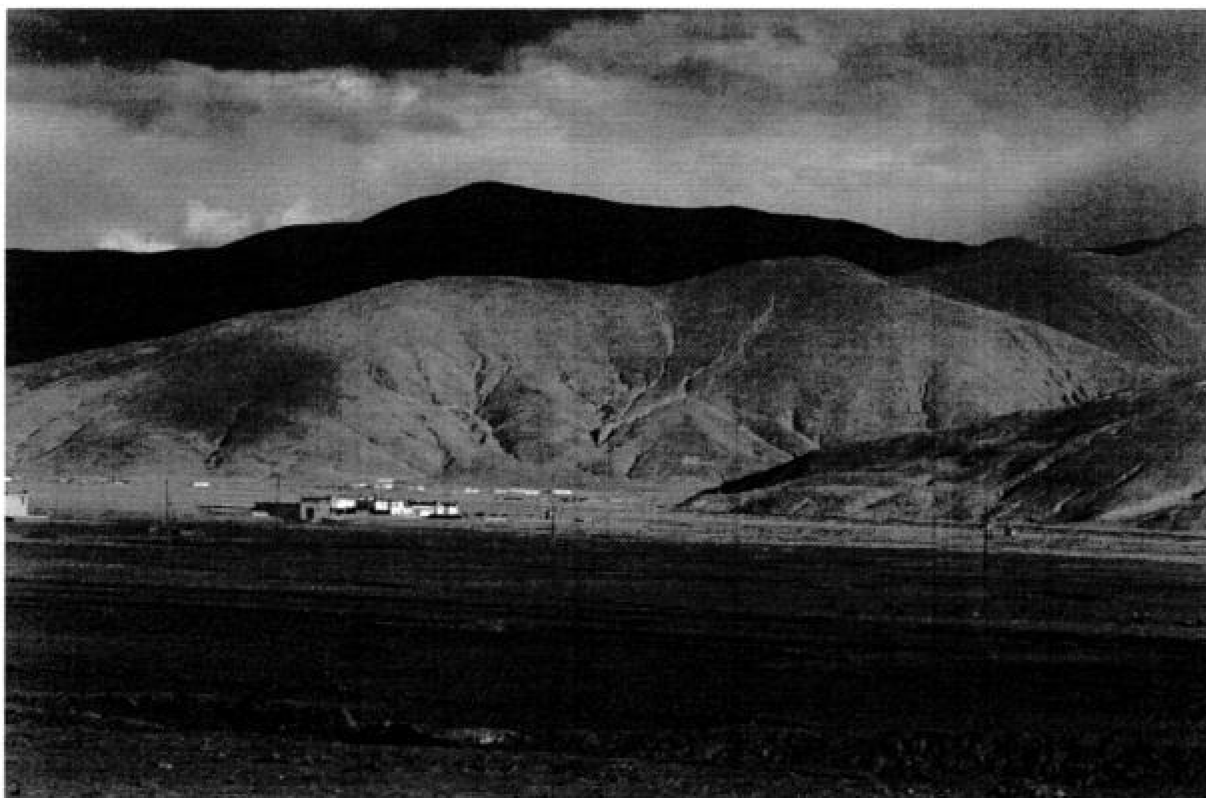


Figure 6. bKra shis mkhar kha or mKhar kha, the birth place of gTsang smyon Heruka, north of rGyal rtse (photo: Stefan Larsson).

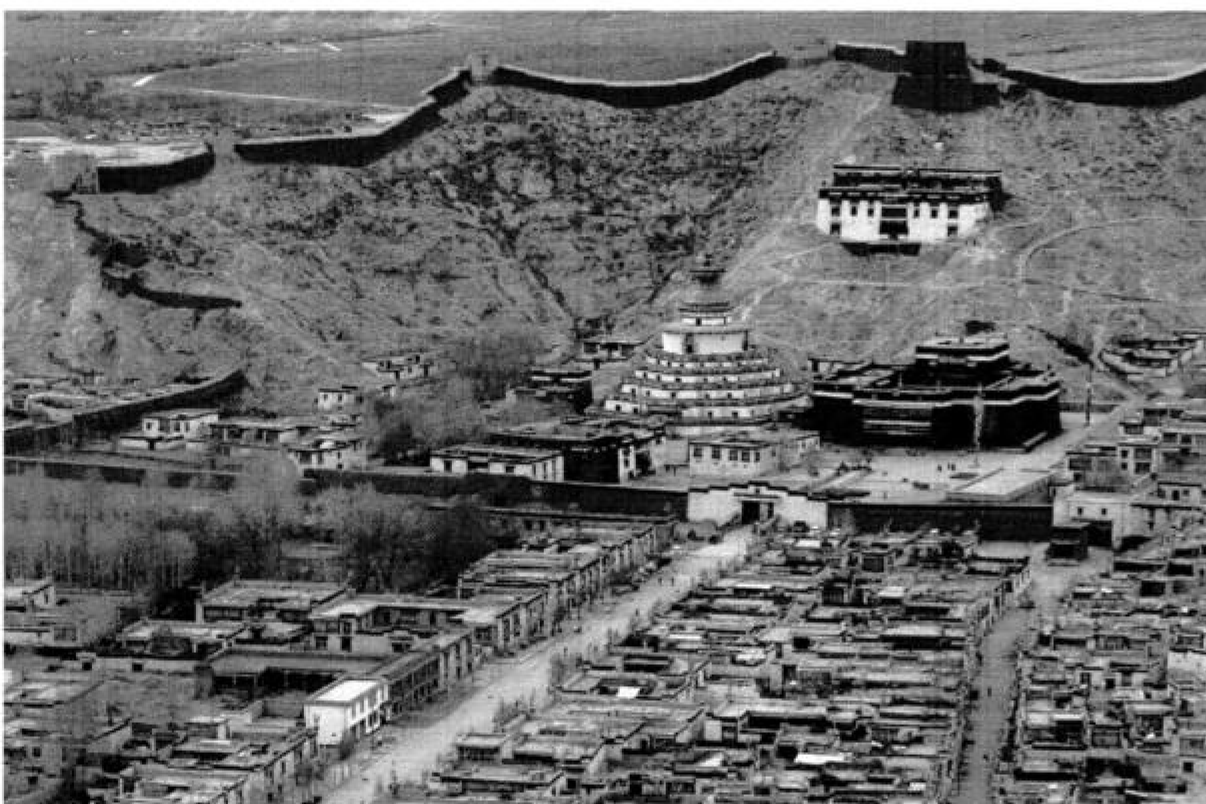


Figure 7. dPal 'khor chos sde, the monastic complex of rGyal rtse where gTsang smyon spent about three years as a young monk, before becoming a wandering yogin (photo: Stefan Larsson).



Figure 8. The famous sKu 'bum or bKra shis mgo mang mchod rten of dPal 'khor chos sde in rGyal rtse (photo: Stefan Larsson).



Figure 9. Gur pa gra tshang, the monastic department where gTsang smyon studied the tantras while he was a monk in of dPal 'khor chos sde (photo: Stefan Larsson).



Figure 10. A well in sTag tshal from which gTsang smyon Heruka is believed to have revealed a ritual dagger (*phur ba*). sTag tshal is situated not far from 'Brong rtse on the way to mKhar kha (photo: Stefan Larsson).



Figure 11. The entrance to the "cave of gTsang smyon" in gYu dga' ldan chos gling, not far from mKhar kha. Local informants told me that gTsang smyon Heruka spent long periods in meditation in this cave (photo: Stefan Larsson).



Figure 12. Inside the "cave of gTsang smyon" in gYu dga' ldan chos gling (photo: Stefan Larsson).

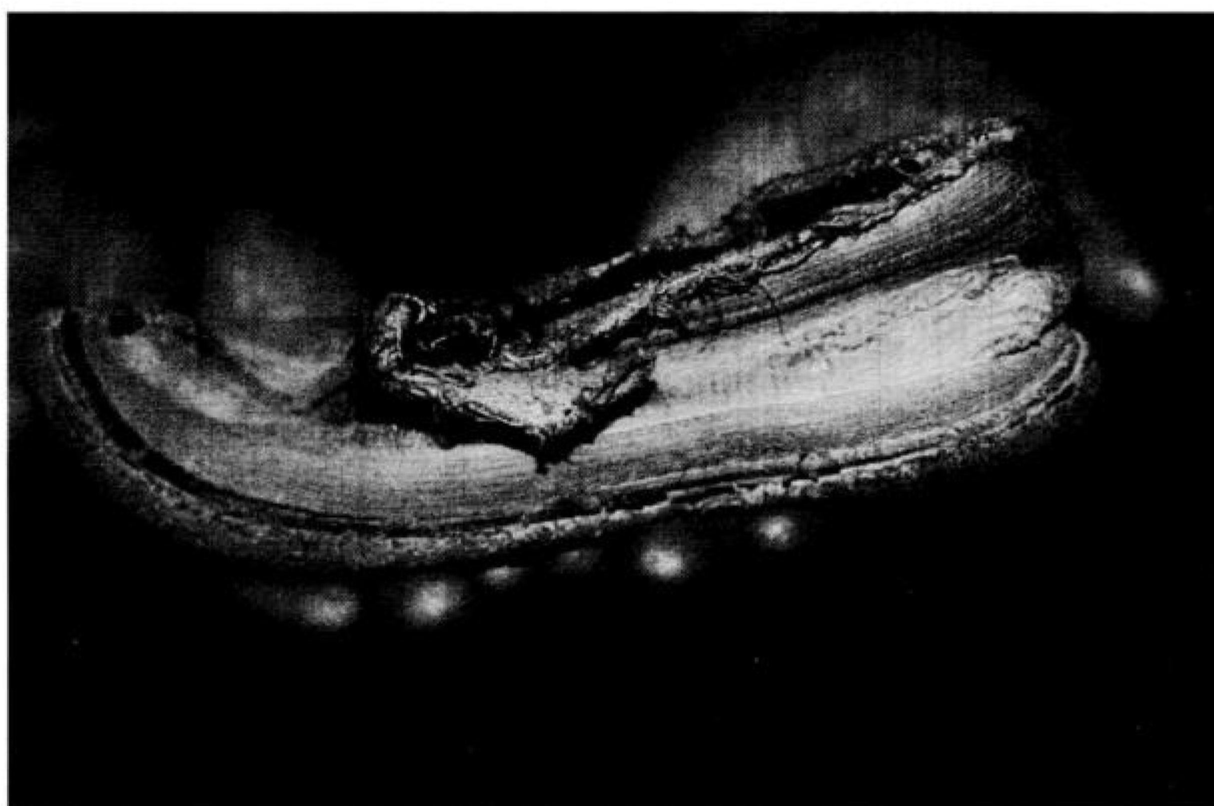


Figure 13. "gTsang smyon Heruka's shoe", kept in a small village near his birthplace in mKhar kha (photo: Stefan Larsson).



Figure 14. Ras chung phug, where gTsang smyon Heruka passed away in 1507. Above the renovated cave-temple are the ruins of the monastery that was built after gTsang smyon's time (photo: Stefan Larsson).



Figure 15. The ruins of the monastery of Ras chung phug where gTsang smyon's lineage, *Ras chung snyan brgyud*, was upheld until recently (photo: Stefan Larsson).



Figure 16. The gTsang smyon Heruka statue in Ras chung phug (photo: Stefan Larsson).



Figure 17. Marpa, Milarepa and Ras chung pa, the first three lineage lamas of the Aural Transmission of Ras chung, Ras chung phug (photo: Stefan Larsson).





Figures 18. and 19. gTsang smyon Heruka (left) as depicted in the *Lion of Faith*. Milarepa, Marpa and Ras chung (right), the first three lineage lamas of the *Ras chung snyan brgyud* tradition as depicted in the *Life and Songs of Lha btsun*.





Figures 20 and 21. gTsang smyon Heruka (left). gTsang smyon's main lama, Sha ra rab 'byams pa sangs rgyas seng ge (right). The picture of gTsang smyon is from the *Life and Songs of Lha btsun*, and the picture of Sha ra ba from the *rnam thar* about him.





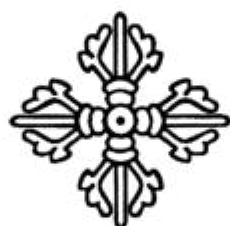
Figures 22 and 23. gTsang smyon's younger brother, dPon chen dkon mchog rgyal mtshan (left). gTsang smyon's female companion, Kun tu bzang mo (right). The picture of gTsang smyon's brother is taken from the *Lion of Faith* and the picture of his consort from the *Collected Songs of gTsang smyon Heruka.*





Figures 24 and 25. Lha btsun rin chen rnam rgyal (left) and rGod tshang ras pa sNa tshogs rang grol (right), two of gTsang smyon's main disciples who wrote *rnam thar*s about him, and upheld and propagated his lineage. The picture of Lha btsun is from the *Life and Songs of Lha btsun* and the picture of rGod tshang from the *Heart of the Sun.*

Appendices



Appendix 1: Chapters Six, Seven and Eight of the *Heart of the Sun*

Chapter Six: How [gTsang smyon], after Having Dispelled his Doubts of Listening and Reflecting, Mainly Practised.

(27) [...] *drug pa la bskor tsho gnyis kyi dang po ni / de ltar slob gnyer gyi dus su 'ang rnam pa skye rims (bskyed rim) lha'i nga brgyal (nga rgyal) dang / ngo bo chos nyid gnyug ma 'od gsal phyags (phyag rgya) chen po'i ngang las thugs g.yos pa med pas / rgyal po dang / btsun mo dang / blon po sogs stobs dang bsod nams kyi dregs pa'i* (28) *nga rgyal can rnams la phyag dang zhes sa sogs srid zhu (sri zhu) las rgyang bsrings ste / 'jigs pa med par seng ge lta bu'i tshul gyis slar co lo dang gzhad rgad (bzhad gad) du mdzad pas / gnad ma rig pa rnams kyis gdong ngar che ba tsam du 'dzin cing ya mtshan du byedo (bye do) / de dag gi dus cig gur pa rnams dgon pa rdo rje gdan bya ba na chos dbar mdzad cing gzhugs (bzhugs) tshe / tho rangs cig 'ja' 'od kyi dbus na bcom ldan 'das ma rdo rje bdag med ma'i dkyil 'khor lha mo bcwo lnga shin du yid du 'ong ba gzigs te / rang nyid dges pa rdo rje'i (kye pa rdo rje) ngar rgyal (nga rgyal) gyis lha mo so so la snyoms par zhugs pas (bzhugs pas) / lha mo re re la bde ba'i rnam pa mi 'dra ba re re nyams su myong zhing lus ngag yid gsum zag med kyi bde bas ra ro ba byung gsung / de nas skabs cig chos sder rgyang rtse (rgyal rtse) nas sde pa dpon slon (dpon blon) rnams kyang phebs / dge 'dun shin du tshogs pa che ba'i tshogs gral du thod phor dang rkang dung rnams (bsnams) nas byon / ja dang thug pa sogs ka lir gsol de la tsam pa (rtsam pa) dang mar thud btab pa'i skyo ma rkang dung gi (gis) krug (dkrugs) cing gsol bas / gral mdzes (mtshes) kyi dge 'dun rnams gzhad rgad (bzhad gad) du gyur tshe / chos khrims pas mthong nas dge 'dun gyi tshogs gral du 'di 'dra byed pa ci yin zhes rgyug pa sdeg par (rdeg par) rtsams pas / 'o sdeg sdeg (rdeg rdeg) de zhog la nyon cig / thos pa dang rkang gling dge 'dun gyi gral du khur mi chog pa mdo rgyud ga nas bshad / khyod kyi (kyis) bsgrubs (bsgrub) dang gsungs pas lan byed ma nus tshe / 'o na yang khyod rang rtsod dang ngas bshad kyis gsungs pas / kho na re khyod lung rigs kyi nga rgyal dang blo shed byed pa'i kha ya nga mi byed zer / khos gra tshang (grwa tshang) du phyin nas khyod kyi gra pa (grwa pa) 'di spyod pa nyes par 'dug pas / 'byung (dbyung) dgos zhes sleng ba (gleng ba) la rten (brten) / slob dpon*

pas cung zad skyon pas (bkyon pas) rkyen byas de nas rje nyid kyi thugs la da ni bla ma mkha' 'gro'i lung stan (lung bstan) bzhin thos bsam ni mthar phyin / da sgoms pas nyams su ma slangs (blangs) na tshig rigs shes zhing go bas mi grol bas / lpags shi'i (phyi'i) kha bshad dam dpe' dkar ('bras dkar) (29) *gyi sgra tshad dang 'dra la / thos bsam cig bu la mchog tu 'dzin pa sbu ba (lbu ba) rab du rtsags pa'i (rtsegs pa'i) 'phreng ba rir rlom pa lta bu'i gang zag rnams la mig skyen (mig rkyen) bzhag pa dang / bla ma'i bka' yang yod pas lho gnas mchog dpal gyi rtsa ri la sgom du 'gro ba'i dus la bab cing (cing) / de yang rab byung gi chas 'di bsgrub dka' zhing gsang sngags kyi nyams len dang yang phyi ltar na cung zad mi mthun la / ngo bo chos sems kyis byed pas chas (chos) la nges pa rang yang mi 'dug pas / yo byad rnams dge 'dun la phul nas 'gro dgos dgongs ste / chos gos gsum sogs sku chas rnams tshogs su phul / sku sham cig sangs rgyas dpal bzangs (bzang) bya ba'i dge shes cig la sle bem cig yod pa dang rjes te / gongs (dgong) cig gra khang (brang khang) gi rnam g.yengs steng du gzhugs (bzhugs) nas mtshan thog thag rtag gnyis (brtag gnyis) rgyud sa spyad (sa bcad) rgyud 'brel dang bcas pa brgyad stong pa sogs bshar sbyang yang dag par mdzad / de la gnas 'dir nga'i bshar sbyang gi 'jug ma (mjug ma) gyis gsungs nang par snga bar mkhar khar phebs zhag gsum bzhi tsam gzhugs pa (bzhugs pa) mdzad / de nas sku nye rnams chang mthung ('thung) gis yangs pa'i dus cig na cung po (gcung po) dkon mchog rgyal mtshan la khyod rang nga'i rjes la 'gro 'am gsungs pas 'gro zer cung dang lhan cig tshes bcwo lnga'i nub mo byon tshe / nang rol g.ya' sngon mo'i rtser nyi ma shar byung pas bu rten 'brel yod pas tshogs 'khor byas pa grag gsung tshogs 'khor mdzad pas / bud mod lnga mar khu 'tshong du 'gro zer chang khyer byung nas phud zhus pas / rje yi gsung gi khyod rnams kyi ming re re nas shod gsungs pas / gcig na re bdag la bsam 'grub 'dzom zer / gcig na re chos dpal mo zer / gcig na re dge 'dun dpal mo zer / gcig na re chos gzangs dpal mo zer bas / rje yi zhal nas ha ha bud med kyi ming la dge shes 'dra gsung / gcig la don yod dpal mo zer lags zer theg snga song te / rtsa ri'i zhing skyong mkha'* (30) *'gro rnams kyis bsu ba byas pa yino (yin no) / / thos bsam gyis sgro dogs chod nas rtsa ri la gshags pa'i (gshegs pa'i) skor ro / / gnyis pa ni / de nas cung gis da phebs mdzod zhus pas dum gcig sdod bya rog sleb ma byung gsung / de nas bya rog gsum sleb byung nas bskor ba bskor zhing lding la bshog (gshog) 'gyur dang bcas skad sna tshogs 'don zhing 'dug pas / da 'gro gsung thegs pas sha ra gru khar phebs der nang so hor shag pa 'khor bcas kyang gru khar byon byung pa dang dus mtshungs pa las / nang so mi gcig gi phrag pa la gnyes (nyes) nas phag de tsho ga nas yongs yon tan spyi shes gar 'gro dris zer bas / rje yi gsung gis rang re gnyis skad rigs mi cig pa ni min gtam dri rgyu yod na rang re gnyis labs pas (lab pas) chog mod / nga rgyab phyogs nas yongs (yong) nga mdun phyogs su 'gro gsungs pas / khong ni kha gyong rang gcig 'dug zer tshe / rje yi zhal nas snam snum byung tshad ni kho la byugs gyong kyang bya thabs mi 'dug / 'jam pa gangs chu grang mo 'di 'dug dgos na sbyin chog gsung / de nas bleng mo (gleng*

mo) zhib rgyas mdzad pas / hor shag pas rnal 'byor pa bzang por mkhyen nas 'di phyogs su nged kyi mchod gnas su gzhugs (bzhugs) gsung ba la / ma bzhugs par byon pa las lam chas mdzad zer / phye sgro ba do dang sha khog cig lam chas su phul rnal 'byor pa rten 'brel ci 'dug zer ba la / nga bden na dbus gtsang gi bdag po byed pa 'dug gsung / lam rong chung rgyud nas gshegs pas lha sar phebs sang nyin de snel pa 'dos rdzong sar byon / the tshom dang ya nga med par khrom kyi dkyil gshegs nas 'dos (mdos) chen rnams dgyel zhing dum bur gtor / gtor ma la la zhal du gsol la la phyag gis gtor bas / mdos brgyab kyi dmag dpung mi srin po khros pa lta bu go mtshon tshang ma thogs pa mang pos / rje'i sku lus la mda' rdo'i char nyi ma 'grib pa lta bu phab cing mdung dang ral gri dbyug pa rnams kyi thang ma chad kyi bar du snun tshe / rje rnal 'byor kyi dbang phyug gis (31) *zad par sra zhing mthas ('thas) la rab du brtan pa rdo rjes zhes bya ba'i ting 'dzin la mnyam par bzhag pas / mda' mdung gri sogs mtshon cha gang gis kyang phigs par ma gyur zhing dbyug pa snun pa phal cher chag / rdo rgyab pa rnams gyang pho bong la rgyab ba ltar slar yar pas / mtshon bsungs yod pa yin 'dug zhes rdo las byas mang po dang spang thegs ma mang po lag bsor zhing rgyab pas (brgyab pas) / rdo phung chen por gyur kyang grag la bong ba (bung ba) rgyab pa (brgyab pa) ltar ci yang ma nyes shing slar gzhengs nas ma ṇi bkul bas thams cad ha las nas ya mtshan yang skyes bu nyan rang gi rigs shas che ba'i stabs kyis 'di nges par srin pho (srin po) 'am 'byung po'i cho 'phrul yin zer / slar yang dmag rnams kyi bdas zhing bud med rnams kyis ngul mo (ngud mo) dang btsun pa rnams kyis mdo bsgrub (mdos bsgrub) byed cing skye chu'i (skyid chu'i) phyog (phyogs) su bdas tshe / kun gyis mthong sar chu la mi bying bar rlung tshub (rlung 'tshub) chen po zhig du gyur nas chu pha gar gshegs pas / thams cad kyi bya thabs ma rnyed par ya mtshan zhing the tshom du gyur / gnas po dge gnyen chos skyabs kyi mdzad pa rnams thos pas dad pa lhag par skyes nas nang du spyan drangs ja chang sogs gnyen skur (bsnyen bkur) bzang po phul bas / khyod kyi chos ni mi nus nor gyi dngos grub sbyin gyi gsung gsol ras chang dkar yol gang snang bas (gnang bas) / de nas ring po ma lon par shin tu phyug cing longs spyod 'dzom par gyur nas phyis kyang sha ni tu mo so (mos so) // de nas de'i res kyang lam dags po (dwags po) rgyud nas zung mkhar la thog du phebs / mnyam med rin po che sha ra ba dran pas / spyan chab mang po bsil zhing dang po'i gzhugs sa (bzhugs sa) dang sku gshegs sa sku gdung gzhu sa (bzhu sa) phyi rten rnams la rkyang phyag dang skor ba mang du mdzad / de nas a 'o chos rje mnyam nyid rdo rje ba la dang po mnyam med rin po che'i drung du gsan pa'i chos rnams kyi rgyud yig sogs dogs sbyod (dogs dpyod) rnams dang / slar u rgyan snyen bsgrub dang / zhing skyong nag po seng ge sdong (gdong) can gyi rje gnang bgrub thabs sogs ma lus par* (32) *gsan / de nas rtsa rir bzhugs pa'i 'tsho chas dang bcas te rtsa ri bod lungs su phebs / dbon pa ba sku chas dang bcas g.yag dang sdebs mngon (sngon) la gnas nang la rdzangs / rje nyid rjes nas u rgyan gyi pad zha (zhwa) sgro dar dang bcas pa cig yod pa de dbu la bzhes / sku la gle bem (kle bem [or] sle bem) de rnams*

(bsnams) phyag du mtshon cha kha ṭaṃ ka cig yod pa thogs nas 'byon zhing yod pa las / rib la spang mor phebs pa dang mi mang po long long 'dug pa ci byed gsungs pas / rje btsun kun dga' bzang mo dang / dpal 'chi med grub pa gnyis dags po (dwags po) phyogs la 'byon pa yin / de'i skyel thung la nang so bkra shis dar rgyas dpon g.yog sogs bya pa yon mchod rnams 'dir byon pa yin zer / der rje nyid kyis khong rnams yong pa'i lam rang du 'phred la gzims nas lta stangs la gzhugs (bzhugs) tshe / khong rnams sleb (bslebs) byung te ci yang mi byed par khong rang rnams lam bzur nas song / la la na re rgyal ('gyel) chas sam zog po cig 'dug zer de nas res (re) zhig nas gzhengs (bzhengs) byon te sgo la khyi kha sprod du rtags (btags) 'dug pa la ma 'dzems par nang du thal byung du byon bas / rje btsun kun dga' bzang mo / dpal 'chi med grub pa / bya pa bkra shis dar rgyas rnams 'khor mang pos bskor nas gral sgrigs (bsgrigs) te gsol byed pa dang thug pas / rje yis gral la zhugs byon te rims (rim) kyis (gyis) zas 'brel lhug (blug) gsung zhing byon pas / bya pas tshang ma blug (blugs) byung der rjes blo chung dang bcas rten 'brel legs byung gsungs nas / rje btsun ma'i cog thog na snying rtsos (btsos) pa cig 'dug pa had khyer mdzad de zhal du gsol tshe / rje btsun ma na re btsun chung rtogs (ltogs) la'i kha ba la zer bas nga rtogs (ltogs) la kha bar ma zad rgyo yang 'dod gsungs pas / mchi ('chi) med pa na re de 'dra'i spyod pa byed pa la yon tan spyi (ci) shes zer / ngas dpal dges pa rdo rje shes gsungs pas / rje btsun ma na re 'o na / yid 'ong mi 'ong rnam rtog phyir / zhen pa tsam du 'ong mi bya'o / zer ba 'di gang yin zer ba la rje yi gsung gi (gis) khyod 'dra ba'i bu (33) *mo mdzes ma la yang chags par mi bya / mdze mo lta bu la yang skyug gro (bro) bar mi bya zer ba yin gsungs pas / mchi ('chi) med pas rje btsun ma la mig tshums (btsum) cig byas nas sbyod pa de 'dra byed pa la spyod pa'i le'u shes dgos pas thon zer / rje yi zhal nas btsun chung snying rje gsung / spyod pa'i le'u sa gcad (bcad) 'brel ('grel) pa / rgyud gzhan gi rgyab skyor dang bcas bshad pa yang dag par mdzad rjes / phyag se gol rtog (gtog) cing 'o de la khyed gtso'i (tsho'i) chos 'brel bgyis (gyis) gsungs pas / kun yid 'phrog cing dad pa thob la dpal 'chi med grub pa'i zhal nas / phyi rgyud sde'i bshad pa dang lung rigs nang rnal 'byor pa'i nyams rtogs kyi zil dang gtul (brtul) zhugs / phral du nyams nga thog rdzis kyi spyod pas skyen bzang ngan mngon gsum du lam du glongs (lhong ba) lugs 'di lta bu'i phyi nang stag (rtags) mthun pa'i rnal 'byor pa snyigs ma'i dus 'dir nyin mo'i dkar (skar) ma lta bur 'dug rjes su yid rangs gsung phyag thal mo sbyar spyan rtsum (btsums) nas dbu gug gug mdzad tshe / nang so bya pa na re rnal 'byor pa bzang po don mthun gcig 'dug lags sam zhu ba la / dpal 'chi med grub pa'i zhal nas ngas rnal 'byor pa mang po cig mthong ste / phyi nang stag (rtags) 'phrod pa'i rnal 'byor pa khong tsam las ma mthong gsungs pas / der tshogs pa rnams shin tu yid ches shing rje rnal 'byor kyi dbang phyug chen po'i yon tan gyi sngags pa dang che ba phyogs kun tu sgrogs pa la brtson par gyur zhing khyad par bya pa khri dpon shin tu mos nas / khyed rtsa ri la gzhugs (bzhugs) na bsgrub rgyags 'bul zer ba la / za ba drin che ba gcig yin rkyal (skyal) bas yong gsung / ston*

chos rgyal lhun por phebs pa'i zhal bzhes mdzad do / de nas gnas nang la phebs pa las de nub gtsang pa rgya'o la yang rmi lam bzang po sngar rmi ma myong ba byung ngo / de nas dbyar byar chos sder pheps bya pa chos rgyal dpal bzangs la / bya pa khri dpon gyi rnal 'byor pa 'di spyod nyes rang cig 'dug pas dri ba mdzad zer (34) *ba' (ba'i) yi ge skur ba la rten (brten) rnas zhabs rtog (tog) yang dag byas / dri ba mang ba byas pa la gang la gang 'dod kyi bshad pa mang po mdzad pas / shin tu mas par (mos par) gyur la nga'i (de'i) tshe chos sde'i gtsug lag khang rtsig pa'i sgang la 'dug cing / nyin cig chos rje chos rgyal dpal bzang pa'i gsung nas khyed grub pa thob pa'i rnal 'byor pa yin pas / nged 'dir mgon khang zhig rtsig bsam pas khyed kyis sa 'dul ba dang rten 'brel sgrig pa sogs mdzad dgos gsung / rje yi zhal nas bstan pa dang sems can la phan pa yin pas los byed gsung / de nas rje nyid shan rar phebs te rgyu ma rnams khrag gis rgyangs te phyag zhabs kyi gdub bu mdzad / glo snying dmar po phyag du snams (bsnams) sku lus thams cad khrag gis byugs te rdo rje'i 'gros kyi chams ('cham) mdzad cing byon / rdo rje phur pa'i sa 'dul gyi chams ('cham) rnams yongs su rdzogs par mdzad rjes glo snying rnams mgon khang gi gung gis sa la sbas nas chos skyong rnams la bka' sgo mdzad ma 'ongs pa na gnas 'di srungs ma'i nus pas 'dzin pa 'dug gsung / de nas ston mchod la bya pa khri dpon dang yon mchod kun lhan cig du sdebs nas phebs pa las / bya pa dbon g.yog sngon la byon rje nyid rjes tsam la phebs tshe / rong po sogs khams pa'i 'dren byed pa'i ri pa mang bas / jo'o la'i thog ru lam rdzings (rdzongs [or] brdzis) pa las / rjes khong tsho'i khrod la 'phyongs (mchong) shing phebs pas ri pa rnams zhe sdangs langs te / gri ring thung dbyug pa sogs kyi (kyis) bsod (gsod) ci thub byas kyang ma skyon pa dang / slar phyag zhabs rgyab du skyigs (bkyig) te gangs gis (gi) ser ga 'jigs su rung ba'i nang du skyur tshe / de nub der gzhugs (bzhugs) nas gtum mo sgoms pas sku 'khor gyi gangs 'dom gar cam zhu zhing sang snga bar pheps pas / rtsa ri tra ye shes kyi 'khor lor rdor 'dzin su ru kha mthas rtso (gtso) byas jo bzangs dang ri pa / nya ma pho mo tshogs pa'i khrom rnams kyi khrod la phar rgyug tshur rgyug dang 'phyong (mchong) pa dang / phyag g.yas su bu ram dang g.yon du dri chen thogs nas ro (re) mos su gsol ba dang kun la gsang chab* (35) *gtor ba dang la la brdung ba sogs mi 'tsham pa'i spyod pa ci mdzad kyang snang ba zil gyis mnan te kun mos par gyur nas mtshan rtsa ri dpha' bor gsol zhing grags so / de nas de'i dgun de nas zung (bzung) te gtsang pa spang chung du gzhugs (bzhugs) nas lo gsum gyi bang (ring) gnas nang nas la phyir mi thon cing / khyad par du zla ba drug gi bar la phug pa'i phyir mi thon par sku sgom thag lus gnad dang ma bral bar thugs dam thun drug du gtsang nas mdzad cing / de yang ngo bo mnyam gzhag (bzhag) phyag rgya chen po las ma g.yos bzhin du rnam yid dam gyi lha dges pa rdo rje'i dkyil 'khor rten dang brten bar bcas pa me long gi gzugs snyan ltar gsal ba'i ngang nas / srod tho rangs snga dro dgongs mo te / thun bzhir gtum mo kho na sgoms / gung thun la 'od gsal gyi ngang du snal (ngal gso) cung zad re mdzad / gzhan thun par thams cad du dges pa rdo*

rje'i snyan pa kho na mdzad / gsol kyi zhabs rtog (tog) rnams drung dbon po pas mdzad nas nyin mtshan g.yel med du sgoms (bsgoms) pas / gtsang pa rgya'o na re / mi yong ba'i mun mtshams nyi ma re yang 'des ('das) / rkang pa yang dum re lcags (bcags) na dga' / sa rlan sa can chu ngan 'dir khyod zha'o 'am dgur bo gcig byed ba byin nam yang yang zer kyang / ma gsan par nyin mtshan med bar 'bad pas zla ba lnga tsam song ba dang thugs dam kyi rlongs (rlung) dang / chu ngan zhing lus gnad ma bshig pa'i stobs kyi (kyis) / zhabs kyi dgyid (skyid) khung du snag (rnag) bsags nas shin tu snyung yang zla [?] bar du thugs rus mdzad / de nas kyang snyung du rang song nas zhabs gum (bskums) zhing mi bzod pa lta bu'i zug dang / spyod lam la yang mis gdan 'dren dgos pa byung te / nyin gcig dbon po ba med par gtsang pa rgya'o la snyung g.yog bcol bas / kho na re / de kho nga la ma nyan pas lan pa yin zer / der khos sdod lam la gdan 'don che blos ma longs bar drag shul gyis kyur (gcir) bas / zhabs kyi sngag (rnag) rnams sdol (rdol) te sang nyin nas 'khrul 'khor thub pa tsam byung / de nas sku sbyongs la 'bad pas snyung ba las grol te / smyug ma'i phyag 'khar gcig bsnams nas zhangs (36) *lcags pas / sdo (rdo) bcal la phyag 'khar kyi rjes gcig kyang byungo (bung ngo) / de nas yang sngar ltar nyin mtshan ska (skad) gcig kyang ma yengs par bsgrub pa 'ba' gcig mdzad do / skyes bu'i mgo la me 'bar ba bsod (gsod) pa lta bu'i brtson 'grus kyis bsgrub pa snying por mdzad pa'i bskor tsho te le'u drug pa'o //*

Chapter Seven: How [gTsang smyon], Assisted by the Yidam-gods, Perfected Experience and Realization

bdun pa ni rgyas par 'og nas mya ngan 'das dus su gsal ba ltar nyi shu dgu'i nub gcig mnyam med sha ra ba dang mjal zhing / de'i thugs rjes bcom ldan'das dges pa rdo rje'i dkyil'khor rten dang brten bar bcas ba sngon gsum (mngon sum) du gzigs / dbang bzhi yongs su rdzogs par bskur / gsang mtshan khrag 'thung rgyal por gsolo (gsol lo) / de nas sang nyin de bya 'phur sgang gi lho'i chu 'gram du khams mo 'brum nag gis shi ba'i ro gcig byung ba / dge shes o rgyan bya ba'i grogs mched gcig gis mthong nas / dbon po ba la ltan (bstan) nas khyid (khyed) thod pa la rtsis che bas ro pha gi na 'dug zer / de cung (gcung) gi rje la zhus pas / mtshams dam par spyad pa yang dngos grub thob pa las med / myur bar 'gro gsung ro de'i rtsar phebs / ro de'i thod pa cung (gcung) gis gcad nas rje la phul bas sha dang klad pa bzhes shin thugs 'ur nas mi kun la byin rlabs mdzad pas / bu 'dod cing ma byung ba rnams la bu byung ba dang / nad pa du ma nad las grol ba dang / nor 'dod pa la nor byung ba dang / dbang po mi gsal ba rnams gsal ba sogs de dus kyi mi phal che ba la thun mong gi dngos grub rna re (sna re) byung ngo / rje nyid de nas bzung ste / go ba nyams myong blo'i mtshan ma thams cad rang sar grol / bzung 'dzin mtha' dag dbyings su thim

/ / sgom bya bsgom byed kyi blo dang gral (bral) / /cings (bcings) grol med pa'i don mngon du gyur / 'khor 'das gcig du 'dres / byar med kyi shes pa rang so tshugs / mnyam rjes kyi bar lag 'gel ('gyel) shes bya ji lta ba dang ji rnyed (snyed) pa'i mkhyen pa ma lus pa rgyas / ye shes lnga la gsal 'grib dang rgyun chad med / rtsa thams cad kyi 'dud (mdud) ba grol zhing dbu mar dag / dangs (dwangs) ma dkar dmar gyis sku'i gnas ma lus pa gang zhing dangs (dwangs) ma chen por dag / rlung thams cad dbu ma ye (37) *shes kyi rlung du thim zhing rnam bar dag te / lam rims (rim) skyes pa dang mtho dman la ma ltos par gcig char du sa lam thams cad dus gcig la bsgrod / stobs bcu mi 'jigs pa dang ma 'dres ba sogs sangs rgyas kyi che ba dang / mi zad rgyan gyi 'khor lo sogs rgyal ba'i yon tan ma lus pa btsol (rtsol) med du rdzogs / dus der sku bzhi ye shes lnga'i bdag nyid khyab bdag rdo rje 'chang gi dgongs pa mngon du gyur ste / yid dam lhas rjes su bzung cing 'od gsal ma bu 'dres nas gdod ma'i mkha' la sku bzhi ye shes lnga'i lta (rta) bdun shar ba'i bskor tsho te le'u bdun pa'o //*

Chapter Eight: How [gTsang smyon] Roamed the Holy Places and Rugged Charnel Grounds, and became Completely Victorious Everywhere by Practising Disciplined Conduct

brgyad pa ni / de nas rje rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug chen po'i dgongs pa la da ni rang don mthar phyin par grub pas / da gzhan don bya ba'i dus la bab dgongs te / dus gsum sgrib pa med par gsal ba mkhyen par chen po zhes bya ba'i ting nge 'dzin la gzhugs (bzhugs) nas / ye shes chen po'i spyan gyi gzigs tshe / snyings (snyigs) ma lnga sngo ba'i sems can rnams nyon mongs pa rags pa / tshe thung ba nad mang zhing dbul ba the tshom za zhing log lta che bas / rang don du phyogs thams cad las / rnam par rgyal yang / phal gyi blor mi shong bas da dung gzhan don du lam zhugs kyi rnal 'byor pa rang rgyud pa'i tshul bzung nas / brtul zhugs kyi spyod pas phyogs kun du rgyu zhing mchog gi yon tan rnams shin tu sbas pas / phal pa rnams dang tshul stun na gdul bya rman (dman) pa rnams la rnam dkar gyi 'brel pa 'jog cing / bstan pa dang sems can gyi don rgya che bar dgongs nas rtsa ri'i tshogs gral shin du che ba gcig la sku gcer bur ro thal kyis byugs shing / khrag gi thig le / zhag gi zo ris / mi gcig shi ba'i ro yi rgyu ma rnams do shal dang / phyag zhabs kyi rgyan du mdzad / rkang lag gi sor mo rnams gcad nas srad bu la rgyus pa'i phreng bas dbus skra bcings / gcig gis rus pa'i rgyan ka rags med pa gcig phul ba sku la gsol / res rgod res ngu / khyad par khrom gseb du gya mtho sna tshogs (38) *mdzad pas / rtsa ri pa mi spyod shin tu rtsub kyang nus pas zil gyi mnan zhing thugs rjes dbang du 'dus pas shin tu mos shing kun kha 'cham par mtshan gtsang pa smyon par gsol nas phyogs kun du nyi zla ltar grags so / de dus chos skyong gi gtso bo gur mgon la*

mdzad pa las / rtsa ri rong skor la phebs phyag bzhi phug du zhag gcig gnas bbrel ('brel) la gzhugs (bzhugs) tshe / nam phyed la mi nag po cig gis rje snon (gnon) du byung bas dgyes pa rdo rje'i ting nge 'dzin gyi 'dzings bas / res kho 'og du tshud / res rje 'og du tshud / rgyal pham mnyam pa las slar 'khor lo sdom pa'i ting nge 'dzin gyi 'dzings pas kho 'og du tshud tshe / de na re / nga mgon po phyag bzhi pa yin mkha' 'gro snyan rgyud kyi srung ma yang nga yin / de min ngas khyed kyi chos skyong byed pas gtor ma re yang slang / nga yi bsgrub bskor nams kyi yig cha yang sang 'bul mkhan yong zer mi snang bar song [/] de nub der yod pa rnams la 'ang zil chen po byung / sang dpe cha yang 'bul mkhan byung ngo / / de nas dbyar gnyal du phebs / gnyal du bzhi leb 'grig nas bya pa la dgra byas nas dus zings (zing) chen po 'dug pas / bya pa'i sku rim du drag po'i gtor zor gcig mdzad / der dus zil dang cho 'phrul shin tu che ba byung zhing khyad par nub gcig kong po'i bud med 'dra ba mang pos / mda' char drag po 'bab pa lta bu 'phangs byung tshe / rje yi khyed tsho ci byed ba yin gsungs pas / khyod kyi lta ba'i ya thog de stib stong / spyod pa'i ma thog de stib stong / bsgom pa'i phar thog de stib stong ba yin zer bas / nyams nga med pa'i sdeng (stang) gis lta ba la ya thog stib rgyu ci 'dra gcig 'dug gsungs pas / bja' yal ba ltar mi snang bar gyur te thugs dam la bogs chen po byung / slar g.yul rgyal dus bya pa'i stan (bstan) pa tshugs / de nas jo sras dar rgyal pa pa'i sngags rigs kyi mi shin tu rgod pa cig yod pa / g.yul du gsad pa'i lpags pa g.yang gzhir pa shus / rkang gling dang thos pa bregs / g.yang gzhi sku la gzhes (bzhes) (39) *sha chen dang klad pa zhal du gsol zhing / glu dang gro (bro) brdung bra'i (ba'i) dang nas (ngang nas) dra gor gyi brtsug (gtsug) lag khang na nang so bya pa dpon blon 'khor bcas gra gzhis kyi gral 'grig pa tsam la phyags phebs tshe / nang so bkra shis dar rgyas kyi rten 'brel sgrig par gsol ba btab pa las / thod pa phog ma thog (thogs) klad khrag gi gos zhing klad pas gsum cha tsam gang pa de nyid chang gi bkang te / thog mar rnal 'byor dbang phyug nyid kyi bshes / de lhag nang so bkra shis dar rgyas la snang (gnang) zhing lhag ma lus par gsol bas / nang so sbo (lbu ba) cig pa sogs kyug (skyug) stangs log log 'dug / gsol bya rnams kyi zhag 'ga' shas nang so'i gsol ras kyang za ma nus / nang so de nas zhag bcu'i bar du lus la bde drod 'bar zhing sems bzung 'dzin dang bral ba'i nyams shar / khyod rang gi ngo la mdun ma ci byas tshabs su 'gro snga zhabs dar yong gsung ba / de kho na ltar byung nas phyis kyang shin tu mos so / de nas rdo rigs gsum mgon po bskor ba la dbon po rten 'brel ba dang blag tshang dgon pa'i rnal 'byor pa gcig dang / khabs pa dpon po rgyal pos btang pa'i lam sna ba gcig dang dpon slob bzhis phebs pa las lam du rje yi gsung gis / khyed rang rnams nags khrod ya gir go ba gdod (sdod) zhig / nga la ci byed cing 'dug kyang 'jigs mi dgos pas kha tshum gdod shes pa gyis gcig (shig) gsung / sngon la phebs pa las der rngo / kha gra dang thug te / dug mda' dang / rdo dang mdung thung dang / rme zor (zor ba) dang / ral gri sogs mtshon kho rang rnams la yod tshad kyis stobs kyis gang lcogs nyi ma phyed tsam bsnun tshe / rje rnal 'byor dbang phyug gis zad par thogs pa med pa nam mkha'*

zhes bya ba'i ting nge 'dzin la gzhugs (bzhugs) pas / mtshon rnams sku la mi 'thogs par sa la thal thal 'gro zhing ston tshe rjes ci yang mi yong par 'dug pas lan du ma rgyab kyang / nam mkha' la rgyab pa ltar lus ngal ba tsam las ci yang ma byung tshe / slar yang khong (40) rnams gyi dbu dang phyag zhabs rnams so sor khral ('bral) ste rdo chen po'i sting (gting) rdo dang btsas (bcas) / so sor chu rlung (chu klong) chen po'i nang du 'phangs / sku ngo bo dang nang khrol rnams kyang so sor chu nang du 'phangs te / khur po rnams khur zhing 'gro grags (grabs) yod tshe / chu rlung (chu klong) gi dbus nas sku sngar ltar skyon med par gyen du 'phur ste rngo rnams kyi lag cha dang khur po sogs khrogs ('phrogs) zhing chu la 'phangs / la la (lar) 'gram lcag gis gdungs che re zhig so sor mthor ('thor) zhing slar 'dus te la las gnyug (smyug) thag gis phyag zhabs rnams skyigs (bkyig) la las me sbar la las shing stus (bsdus) te / shing phung ri di'u tsam kyi dbus su bcug phyogs bzhi nas me sbar tshe pha grub thob chen pos bsil zhing grang ba zad par chu'i ting nge 'dzin la bzhugs / khong rnams phyogs phyogs nas ngas (sangs) gos kyis rlung g.yab cing sku (ki) dang bso (bswo) sgras lung pa gang ba tsam byed cing shing ma zad kyi bar du sdad (bsdad) / de nas rnal 'byor dbang phyug gis gzhad (bzhad) cing glu dang gar mdzad la / 'di dus kyi gsung mgur tshig re tsam las yi ger ma thebs so / de nas rngo rnams rje yi sku la nyes skyon gang gis kyang snod (gnod) cing tshugs par ma gyur pas / 'jigs skrag nas mgon po rog po zer zhing so sor gros (bros) so/ de nas dur khrod dang shing gcig chu 'gram dang / thang chen dang / khang stong dang lha khang / lam srang dang tshong 'dus / 'jigs shing kyi (skyi) g.ya' ba'i snyan (gnyan) sa rnams / brtul zhugs kyis spyod pas nyul zhing pheps pa las / kong po'i gnas dang / snya nas dur khrod / yul khams dang / ljongs ma lus par phebs zhing mi ma yin mang po'i don mdzad / khyad par rgyal la sde brgyad phug du zhag 'ga' gcig (zhig) bzhugs tshe / nub gcig snang srid kyi lha srin thams cad tshogs nas / cho 'phrul 'jig su rung ba du ma ston du byung / slar ting nge 'dzin gyis zil gyi mnan nas dam la rtags (btags) shing 'phrin las bsgrub par khas blangs so / de nas lho brag mkhar chur phebs / 'brug pa rgyal (41) dbang chos rje dang mjal / rtag (brtag) pa gnyis pa sogs rgyud dang / thugs dam rtogs pa'i 'brel ('bel) gtam mang du byung bas / rgyal dbang rin po che shin tu gnyes (mnyes) / rje yang thugs shin du mos pas dpal ye shes mdo / na pa phyag bzhi pha li (pa'i) rjes snang (gnang) / bsgrub thabs zhang 'gro ba'i mgon po nas gtsang pa rgya ras la rgyud pa dang / dpal ldan phag mo grub pa nas rje gling la rgyud pa dang / tshe dpag med ras chung lugs kyi tshe dbang tshe khrid cha lag dang bcas pa yongs su rdzogs par gsan / chos kyi bdag por bka' gtad / mnga' gsol dang bcas pa mdzad/ de nas yar 'brog gi snyan (gnyan) sa rnams nyul zhing / mi dang mi ma yin pa rnams la rnam dkar gyi 'brel pa gzhag (bzhag) phyir phebs pa las / sna dkar rtser rgyal po'i btsun mo 'khor bcas zhon pa dang bcas chos sde mngon dgar 'gro ba dang lam du mjal / rje yis btsun mo rta kha nas skyur kyang khro ba med cing kun mos pas / phyag 'tshal ba la rjes rten 'brel cig sgrigs gsungs pas / kha ṭa ka la byi ru gnyis dang mo men gsum phul bas /

rje yi gsung gi khyod la bu gsum dang bu mo gnyis yong pa 'dug gsung / phyis gsung ba ltar byung bas shin tu mos so / de nas lam lcags rtse gri gu rgyud nas yar lungs phu shar gyi bsam sder phebs / rgyal po grags pa mtha' yas 'khor bcas glu khang na dga' ston la tshogs pa dang thug / sgo bsrung pa dang khyi rnams zil gyis gnan nas gral gyi dbu rgyal po yab yum gyi mdun du bzhugs nas / rgyal po'i chang mthung ('thung) 'phro lag nas phrogs te / rje nyid kyis dngul dam nas glug (blugs) gin gsol / tshogs 'khor bzang po zhus tshe sha rnams tshems kyi grad cing gsol / spyi'i (khyi'i) rus pa sbog 'dra ba de btsun mo'i spang (pang pa) du skyar nas mo de khyod la 'kho ba de spyin gyis gsung / de'i rten 'brel gyis bu byung bas phyis kyang shin tu mos so / de nas kyang seng ge ltar gang la'ang 'jigs pa med cing / glang chen (42) *chu la snyog pa ltar the tshom dang bral la / shing lo rlung gis skyod pa ltar zhen med phyogs kun du nges pa med par rgyu zhing / gang la yang phyed (zhen) 'dzin bza' gtad dang bral ba smyon pa lta bu'i tshul gyis gshegs pa las / yar lungs tsha bgrur phebs / der dpon po'i nang la thal g.yung du phebs pa las / sgo so sor gdams nas bsnyen bkur dang sgol (rgol) ba gnyis ka ma byas par btang snyoms su ber (sbir [or] bor) bas / rje yi gsung gis rten 'brel 'chugs khyod la zhag bdun nas snying ston pa 'dra ba gcig yong gi gsung rje phyir phebs so / de nas zhag bdun song ba brgyad kyi nyin bu khyi'u lo brgyad phag cig yod pa byis pa rnams chu rtsed byas pas chus subs (sub) te shi'o / de nas rje nyid chos gra (grwa) chen po rtse thang du phebs mchod rten chen mo'i pad gdan gyi zur du gzhugs tshe / bgab btsun mo rung pa rgyal 'gong 'dra ba chang gis rab du myos pa rnams kyis rdo 'chir ('char) phab cing mtshon cha mang po sku la snun kyang sra zhing 'thas pa rdo rje lta bu'i ting nge 'dzin la mnyam par gzhag pas / gri rnams kyi ma phed cing gri mdung tshug (tshugs) su rgyab pa rnams gug pas / 'di la mtshon srungs yod pa 'dug zer gri gzhang sprag (khrag [?]) la grangs (drangs) rkang pa la sdar (rdar) nas yang yang rgyab tshe / rje yi thugs la spyir dal 'byor gyi mi lus thob / dgos sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa la zhugs rab tu byung ba'i cha lugs byas nas / slab sdom bsrung zhing thar pa bsgrub pa da a cang che te / mtho rigs (ris) kyi bde ba tsam yang mi sgrub par / ngan 'gro'i las kho na bsogs pa skye bo mi nag pa bas kyang long pa 'di 'dra rang snying rje ba la ci grag (drag) na dgongs / thugs rje mi bzod pa lta bu g.yos te spyan chab shor bas / cig na re mtshon srungs zab po rang gcig yod 'dug / gris mi phed 'dug da rung rdo rgyab pa drag zer / cig na re sma ma byung yang na tsha yong gi yod 'dug du yi 'dug zer / cig na re da ma rgyag rang re tsho'i ma thub pa'i dgra rang ni man zer thams* (43) *cad log song zhing / rje yi sku la snyun med cing thus la khro ba med pas me tog gi char phab pa ltar gyur / de nas ba do khar phebs chu byang la 'phebs par dgongs pa las / gru med pa dang thug ste g.yas ru'i chu stengs la rdo rje'i dkyil dkrungs kyis bzhugs shing rlung bzung nas kha ṭaṃ kas kya (skya) ba'i tshul du g.yabs nas gshegs pa'i tshe / chu phar kha na bsam yas pa'i btsun pa dang bud med 'ga' yod pa kun gyus mthong bas / kun gyis phyag 'bul zhing shin tu mos par gyur to / de nas lam gtsang po byang la rgyud nas shel*

grong du phebs / der dpon po 'khor bcas klu khang na skyo sangs kyi ja chang sogs bza' btung byed pa dang thug / der gral gyi gung gshegs nas dpon po'i dngul phor gyi chang mthung 'phro lag nas phrogs te gsol bas / dpon po'i gsol bya ba zhe sdang drag po skyes te bzhin 'gyur zhing chong gri ba yu ma thung du gcig shugs nas chung te sdeg par brtsams pa las / sgyu ma lta bu'i ngang nas dbal dges pa rdo rje'i ting nge 'dzin gyis zil gyis gnan nas / kha ṭaṃ ka phyag du gdengs te / mtshon cha'i rgyal po kha ṭaṃ ka / ma mo mkha' 'gro'i phyag mtshan yin / lan gsum snun na rma dgu 'byung / gsungs nas tshems krigs cing lta stengs mdzad pas / kun ha re las shing gsol bya pa'i lag gi gri sa la lhung pa'i tshe / dpon po na re phud zhus rnal 'byor pa spyod pa la zhugs pa gcig 'dug zer slar mos zhing dad nas bsnyen bkur bzang po phul lo / de nas byang ras grang la phebs tshe / de na mi zhig gis lag na jo bo rje dpal ldan a ti sha'i phyag nas bzhugs pa'i rdo rje rnal 'byor ma'i sku zhig 'dug pa / rje phebs tshe bha ga nas si la 'tshal gyi 'dog lta bu babs pa / rje yi zhal du gzhes pas bde stong gi nyams rtogs khyad par can 'khrung so / de nas mar res yer pa gung thang sogs gzigs nas slar log phebs tshe / sde pa sne'u rdzong pa dpal 'byor rgyal po dpon g.yog (44) *rnams kyang gung thang nas lha sar 'gro zhing 'dug pas / rjes khong tsho'i sngon tsam la byon te lam gyi gung rang du gzhugs / ka pa lir gsang chab bsil te / de la tsam pa'i 'dag pa mdzad gsol zhing gzhugs tshe / grel khal dang khyi mang po sleb pa rnams lam bzur (zur) zhing song / mi rnams na re skyab su mchi thang stong rgyal po yin pa srid zer / de nas dpon po'i skya rags rnams sleb byung te / skya'i zhar snga can rta bran gzhon pa cig gis rje yi thog rang la rta stang byung pas rta 'dom gang tsam nas gyen la langs te lam 'khyogs song / de rjes rta gzhan rnams kyang 'khyogs nas song de nas slar rta pa cig glog gtang byung te / rnal 'byor pa khyed gang nas byon 'di na ci mdzad cing yong da gar 'byon zer bas / gnas yongs na ci byed gsungs pas / sde pas 'bri ba la gtang pa yin legs pos gsungs dang zer / nga la sde pa su yang med gsungs pas / nga la bka' skyon yong khyed mkhyen gsung rogs mdzad zhus pas / 'o na nga kun 'byung nas yin da lta lam na sdug bsngal gyi 'dag pa za zhing yong / da 'gog pa ru 'gro ba yin gsungs pas / khos ma shes par lan gsum tsam skyar nas song / de nang so la zhus pas rnal 'byor pa gya ma tho gsung rabs kyi dgongs don gsung ba cig yod 'dug rtag pa byed dgos zer / de nas lha sar phebs tshe srin po byung zer khrom kun 'ur zhing rgya kram pa rnams kyang sdogs te mi thams cad nang du gros song / de nub lcang sdong gcig gi steng du gzims sang mi re re gnyis gnyis tsam thon byung pa la / cang te'u rdung zhing rkang gling bus pas yang mi rnams gros song / de nas ka ka ni sgo bzhi ma la gzhugs pas la la srin pho (srin po) 'dug zer la la thang stong rgyal po 'dug zer la la grub thob du 'dug zer / der gnas po dge snyen chos skyabs kyis ngo shes te bsnyen bkur phul dpal 'khor sde chen pa'i btsun pa mang po 'dug pas ngo shes nas chos 'brel zhus tshe / sde pa dpol 'byor rgyal pos* (45) *srin pho (po) yin min ltar gtang (btang) byung pas / mi rnams chos kyi dga' ston gyis tshim par mdzad pa'i rgyu mtshan pho nyas rgyal po la zhus pas pho brang dpal 'byor lhun por sbyan drangs /*

de nas sgo drung du phebs tshe 'gron gnyer bas gang nas byon zer ba la / nga ma rig pa nas yin gsung / de nas nang du gral chen la gzhugs (bzhugs) tshe rab 'byams pa gcig gis rnal 'byor pa gang nas byon zer bas / nga ga nas yin cha med gsung ba la / 'o na ma rig pa nas yin zer ba ma yin nam zer / ma rig pa nas yin pas ka cha med gsung tshe ci yang smra ma spobs / de nas bsnyen bkur bzabs bar bshams nas se ra 'bras dpungs pa'i dge shes (bshes) 'ga' rtsod pa byed du bcug tshe / dge shes rnams na re 'di 'dra'i cha lugs dang spyod pa sangs rgyas kyi gsungs pa ni nged kyi ma thos sngar byung pa'i gab le 'ang mi 'dug khyod kyi cha lugs dang spyod pa 'di su'i lugs yin zer tshe / rnal 'byor dbang phyug gi zhal nas / srog chags grog mos ri mi mthong / khrom pa'i rbal pas rgya mtsho'i mtha' mi rnyed / byis pa'i lag pas nam mkha' mi khyeb / khyod kyi ma thos pa'i chos dang shes bya mangs nas med / cha lugs 'di 'dra sngar byung ba'i gab le med na gsang bsngags kyi lha rnams dang / rgya gar gyi grub chen brgya (brgyad) bcu rnams kyang sngar ma byung pa yin nam / tha na ri mor bris pa 'dra yang ma mthong ngam / kho bo'i cha lugs dang spyod pa 'di spyir rdo rje 'chang gi gsang sngags bla med kyi rgyud rnams dang / khyad par dpal dges pa rdo rje'i rtsa ba'i rgyud sdus pa dpal rtag (brtag) pa gnyis pa nas 'di ltar bshad gsung / gang gi spyod pa bya ba'i gang zag / gang du spyod pa'i gnas / nam spyod pa'i dus / gang dang lhan gcig spyod pa'i grogs / spyi phyir spyod pa'i dgos pa / ji ltar spyod pa'i tshul dang drug yod pa yin gsung / rgyud mtha' dag gi rgyab skyor lung rigs dang bcas pa snang nas nged kyi yin lugs de ltar yin / rto gi ba (rtog ge ba) rnams sma (smra) rgyu ci 'dug gsungs tshe bzhan (gzhan) lan ci yang med (46) *bar da lta de ltar gsang sngags spyod pa'i dus ma yin zer / 'o na mi khom pa'i gnas brgyad du skyes tshe gsang sngags spyod pa yin nam / da lta gsang sngags nyams su len pa'i dus ma yin pa gang nas bshad / bsgrubs dang gsungs pas ci yang smra ma spobs par bskyangs te gral las langs song / sde pa mchog du mos pas bsnyen bkur dang 'bul bas gus pas mchodo (mcho do) / de nas chu shul du phebs tshe dmag gsum bcu tsam gyi dbus yur khang cig na dpon po gsum sgrigs pa la gzhi ba rnams kyi skyel chang gi dpon po dbus ma de la bag gsar ma zhig gis bus mo rtsug (btsugs) nas chang 'dren zhing 'dug tshe / rje brtul zhugs spyod pas chang lag nas phrogs de bzhes tshe dmag rnams kyi ral gri dang mdung rnams kyi (kyis) sdigs de / nged (cag) kyi dpon sa dmag la 'byon khar rten 'brel yang 'chug bar 'dug zog po 'di song zer tshe / rje yi kha ṭaṃ ka mnan te mtshon cha'i rgyal po kha ṭaṃ ka / lan gsum mnun na rma dgu 'byung / gtsang pa smyon pa'i phyag mtshan yin // gsun zhing zil gyi (gyis) mnan pas kun bkrag te sdeg ma nus tshe / dpon po na re mdang sa ra ha dang 'jal ba rmis / khong rnal 'byor pa khyad par can cig yin pa 'dug phyag phud (phul) zhus zer dpon po rang gi (gis) byin rlabs zhus so // de nas rong chung rgyud nas yum gyi drung du phebs / chu bar la phebs par chas pa na yum gyis gsung gis / o lo shes da dung dpal 'khor sde chen du sdod la dang po'i chos dga' mo de byed rogs bgyis dang gsung (dgongs pa) ma gnang ba las / yum la zhu ba nan gyis phul bas / cis kyang 'gro na chas 'di rnams nga la zhog*

byon de min srin pho (po) yin pa 'dug zer / mi yis gsod pa 'dug gsung ma gsan par g.yang bzhi dang thod pa lcang lo can gcig yod pa yum gyi phyag du bzhag / de nas dpon po pas chag chi (phyag phyi) bgyis la stod byang rgyud nas phebs pa las / dpal chen ri bo che'i rtsar phebs pa dang dpon po pa mngon la btang rje yis rjes nas (47) *phebs tshe grub chen thang stong rgyal po ri bo che'i rtse mo na tshes bcu'i tshogs 'khor mdzad pa dang thug / der yang zang thal la phebs te grub chen gyi sku 'khris na shing phor shin tu che ba phyi nang gnyis ka skyo mas gos pa cig chang gas (gis) gang (bkang) 'dug pa rje yi phyag du gzhes (bzhes) nas gsol bas kun ha de las grub chen kyang yug zhig spyan che re 'dug / de nas grub chen gyis (gyi) gsung gis rten 'brel legs nga la khyod kyi gos de phul gsung ba la / rje yi zhal nas rten 'brel legs legs pa yin khyod mod pa 'dug pas nga la 'di phul gsung grub chen gyi gle bem la phyag 'jus pas / grub chen gyi gsung nas rnal 'byor pa brtul zhugs can zhig 'dug / nga la yang khyod mi dgos la khyod la yang nga mi dgos par 'dug pas da byon gsung / de nas smon la rgyud nas tsha 'dar phebs / der dpon po nam kha' (mkha') stobs rgyal 'khor bcas gro gzhes (bzhes) kyi gral sgrigs pa dang thug / yang nang la thal g.yung (thal byung) du phebs zas 'brel lhug (blugs) gsung zhing / bhan dha lcang lo can cig yod pa phyag g.yon du bzung / rkang gling mi lag dang bcas pa gcig yod pa phyag g.yasu (g.yas su) rnams nas gral gi (gyi) gung la byon pa'i tshe / dpon po na re gsol ras dgos na phyag tshol ('tshol) zer / der rje yi sku rgyab stan (bstan) nas phyag ya cig gis phyag mdzad pas kun gzhad (bzhad) rgad du gyur / de nas bsnyen bskur (bkur) bzang po phul zhing rings pa'i dge shes (bshes) 'ga' dri ba byed du bcug pas rnal 'byor pa bzang por shes nas nang so na re bla ma rang la phyir bzhugs na bsgrub rgyags 'bul zer / rje yi gsung gis de legs da res chu bar la 'gro phyis sleb pa byed gsung / de nas chu bar la phebs dgongs nas lam zhor la blang 'khor rdza ri zhes bya ba / rje btsun dam pa rgya gar gyi byin gyis rlabs zhing ri de la skyal ba'i ro dang / der phyin pa'i gang zag rnams la ngan song mod par lung bstan pa zhing skyong gi mkha' 'gro ma kun ḍa li mched lnga gzhugs (bzhugs) shing / klu bdud ma sbrul thod can gnas pa /* (48) *dur khrod bsil ba tshal nas spyan drangs pa'i rdo skyed (sked) nyag po ro gdan du sting (bting) ba / sha khrag za ba'i bya dang spyan zan (gcan gzan) du ma rgyu ba / snang srid gyi lha ma srin bde (sde) brgyad ma lus pa'i 'dus sa ro bsar (gsar) snying dang / rkeng rus gyi tshogs dang ro langs dang / 'byung po du mas gang ba 'jigs shing skyi g.ya' ba'i gnas der phebs / der zhag shas bzhugs shing ro gdan gyi steng du gzims pas nub cig mngon gsum (sum) du ro langs pho mo mgo med pa dang / rkang lag med pa dang lus kyi phyed med pa dang / nang rol rang gi lag pas 'don pa dang keng rus dang / ro langs mo 'ga' re mtshan ma lag pas phun (phan) tshun du bsgrod pa rnams bro brdung zhing gar byed pa las / thugs dam 'ur nas bzhengs te / ro langs pho rnams dang 'dzings zhing mo rnams la rol bas cho 'phrul kun rang zhir gyur to / de nas sang de ro cig sreg cing cig bya la 'thor ba las ro thal rnams sku la byugs / sgyu (rgyu ma) ma rnams mgul dang phyag zhabs kyi gdub bu*

mdzad de nye mchod byed pa'i khrom rnams kyi khrod du byon nas / gtor ma rnams zhal du gsol ba dang khrom rnams kyi seb (gseb) du 'phyong ba (mchongs) dang res bro brdung zhing glu gar dang / res ngu zhing brang rdung pa dang / rdo rje lasu (las su) rung par mdzad nas bud med thams cad 'ded cing zhon pa dang / 'o dang 'khyud pa dang / 'khud pa dang / res rdo rje sbub (sbubs) su drangs nas bu ga pa hu (ha) re ba'i mtha' ma la spu sud tsam las med par mdzad nas / khyo ga thams cad 'ded cing nga la rgyor shog gsung zhing bzung nas 'khyud pa dang / dri chen dang dri chu mi la 'thor zhing zhal du gsol ba sogs brtul zhugs kyi spyod pa ci mdzad kyang kun 'jigs zhing bkrag pa las sgol (rgol) ba yang ma nus / gang zag theg dman gyi rigs mang bas mos pa tsam yang ma byung / de nas chu bar la phebs pa las tshe rings ma dang zhing skyong sogs chu bar kyi gzhi bdag rnams kyis bu se la'i la thog nas bsus mchod pa bzang po phul nas mi snang pa song ngo / rje nas chu bar du phebs dbyar smad la phyi skor cig gzigs / ston gzhugs (49) */ chu bar du mdzad / dgun bla ma bon ri ba sogs drin (brin) pa'i gnas bskor ba rnams dang sdebs nas lung bstan gnyis pa 'phrin las gyi gnas chen 'phags pa shing kun la phebs / rje yis bon ri ba la phyag ma mdzad pa dang sku spyod gya (gyi) ma tha mdzad pa'i stobs kyis drin pa'i gzhon skyes pho mo rnams ma dga' bar mang shing se ba yin zer dan rog phu lu gang tsam zhus cing bzhes kyang cung zad snyung ba tsam las nyes par ma gyur to / de nas bal yul du phebs bod thang mgon por skangs (skang) bshags skul dang bcas ba mdzad bas / yid la med la gnam sa grubs (sgribs) 'gro ba tsam gyi sa chen po rab du (tu) g.yos thug chom dang 'ur sgra chen po dpag med byung / rje yi gzigs snang la mgon po'i sku de ri rab tsam du gyur nas bro brdung drag po mdzad pa gzigs pas / bal pod kyi mi der tshogs pa rnams kyi mthong snang la rje thugs 'ur nas mgon po dang phyag sbrel nas bro brdung mdzad pa mthongo (mthong ngo) / ri dgas phra mo'i nang na can zan (gcan gzan) gyi rgyal po ltar brtul zhugs kyis spyod pas phyogs thams cad las rnams par rgyal ba'i bskor tsho de le'u brgyad pa'o //*

Appendix 2: The Introductory Verses of the *Lion of Faith*

བླ་མ་ལྷ་དང་མཁའ་འགྲོའི་ཚོགས་ལ་གུས་པར་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ལོ།

I respectfully pay homage to the assemblage of lamas, deities and mkha' 'gro*s*.

།སངས་རྒྱས་ཀུན་འདུས་དྲུག་པ་རྡོ་རྗེ་འཆང་། །རྒྱལ་བའི་མཛད་པ་མཐའ་ཡས་བསམ་མི་ཁྱབ།

།མཚན་ཙམ་ཐོས་པས་སྲིད་ཞིའི་རྒུད་པ་སེལ། ཧེ་རུ་ཀ་དཔལ་བླ་མའི་ཞབས་ལ་འདུད།

I bow down at the feet of the glorious lama, the Heruka! You are the unification of all the Buddhas, the sixth Vajradhara. The deeds of the Victorious Ones are endless and inconceivable. You clear away the disturbances of samsara and nirvana by merely having your name heard.

།མགོན་ཁྱོད་རྒྱལ་བས་ལུང་བསྟན་ཇི་བཞིན་དུ། །གངས་རིའི་ཁྲོད་འདིར་སྤྲུལ་པའི་སྐྱེ་བ་བཞེས།

།ཐོག་མཐའ་བར་དུ་དགེ་བའི་མཛད་པ་ཡིས། །སྙིང་པོའི་བསྟན་པ་ཕྱོགས་བཅུར་སྤེལ་ལ་འདུད།

I bow down to you protector! Just as prophesied by the Victorious Ones, you took birth as an emanation in these snowy mountains.

Through virtuous actions from beginning to end, you spread the essential doctrine in the ten directions.

།གནས་གསུམ་རི་ལ་སྒྲུབ་པའི་རྒྱལ་མཚན་བཙུགས། ཁྱད་པར་ཙ་རི་ཏྲ་ཡི་གནས་ཆེན་དུ།

།དགེས་པ་རྡོ་རྗེས་རྗེས་གཟུང་བླ་མ་དང་། ཡེ་ཤེས་མཁའ་འགྲོས་ལུང་བསྟན་བརྙེས་ལ་འདུད།

I bow down to you who erected the victory banner of accomplishment in the three holy-mountain places.

Especially in the great holy place Tsa ri ṭa, Hevajra took care of you, and you received prophecies from the lamas and wisdom ḍākinīs.

།སྤྱོད་པའི་དུས་མཁྱེན་དུར་ཁྲོད་ཆས་ཀྱིས་བརྒྱན། །རོ་བསྙོམས་ཐོག་རྡིས་བརྟུལ་ཞུགས་སྤྱོད་པ་ཡིས།
།འབྱུང་བཞི་དུག་མཚོན་མི་སྡུག་རོ་ལངས་སོགས། །ཟིལ་མནན་སྤྱོད་པ་མཐར་ཕྱིན་མཛད་ལ་འདུད།

I bow down to your deeds of perfecting the conduct. When you knew it was time for action, you adorned yourself with charnel ground ornaments and by the disciplined conduct of the trampling upon [and] equalization of taste you subdued the four elements, poisons, weapons, bad persons, walking corpses and the like.

།ཏི་སེའི་གནས་སུ་བྲག་ལ་ཞབས་རྗེས་བཞག །མེ་དཔུང་དབུས་སུ་མི་རོའི་གདན་ལ་བཞུགས།
།རྡོ་རྗེའི་སྐུ་ལ་མཚོན་གྱི་ཆར་ཕབ་ཀྱང་། །སྣང་སྟོང་སྒྱུ་མར་ཤར་བ་ཁྱོད་ལ་འདུད།

I bow down to you, for whom even a rain of weapons on the vajra-body shone forth as an illusory empty appearance.

To you, who left a foot-imprint on a rock at the holy place of Te se and used a human corpse as a seat in the midst of flames.

།རོ་རྐྱང་འགྲུ་བ་གཟུང་འཛིན་སྤྲིན་ཚོགས་ཅན། །གཟུང་འཛིན་འདུད་ (མདུད་) གྲོལ་དབུ་མའི་མཁའ་ལ་དེངས།

།རྟོགས་པའི་ཉི་འོད་རྒྱས་པ་ནང་གི་རྟགས། །ཕྱི་རོལ་གདུལ་བྱའི་མིག་ལམ་བསྟན་ལ་འདུད།

I bow down to you [gTsang smyon]! The clouds of dualistic clinging moved in the right and left hand channels.

Untying the knots of dualistic grasping it dissolved in the sky of the central channel.

The rays of the sun of realization spread, and you displayed the inner signs outwardly for the eyes of the disciples.

།གྲུབ་མཆོག་གཙང་པ་མཁའ་ལྡིང་དབང་པོ་ཡིས། །རྗེས་བཟུང་བསྐལ་བཟང་ཉམས་རྟོགས་རས་དཀར་གྱི།
།གཤོག་པ་ཅན་རྣམས་འཕུར་ཞིང་ལྡིང་པ་ཡིས། །གངས་ཅན་ལྗོངས་ཀུན་ཁྱབ་པར་མཛད་ལ་འདུད།

I bow down to the highest siddha, the man of gTsang, the powerful Garuda.

By looking after the birds of white cotton, the fortunate ones with experience and realization, [you] made their flying and soaring pervade the entire snowy land.

།ཆུ་བར་ཞིང་སྐྱོང་མཁའ་འགྲོས་བསུ་བ་བྱས། །བསྙན་རྒྱུད་མགོན་པོས་དགེས་སྤྲོའི་མཆོད་པ་ཕུལ།

།ཤན་ཏ་སྤུ་གྲིས་བསྐུལ་ཞིང་གསོལ་བ་བཏབ། །དཀར་ཕྱོགས་ལྷ་ཡིས་བཞེད་དོན་བསྒྲུབས་ལ་འདུད།

I bow down to you who were welcomed to Chu bar by the ḍākinī field protectors.

The protector of the Aural Transmission offered delightful offerings.

Shan ta spu gri prayed to and exhorted to you, and the benevolent gods (*dkar phyogs lha*) carried out your wishes.

།ལྷར་བཅས་འགྲོ་བའི་བསོད་ནམས་ཞིང་གི་རྟེན། །གོ་མ་ས་ལ་གྷ་ཏ་མཆོད་རྟེན་གྱི།

།ཕྱི་དོར་བྱ་བ་ལས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་བསྐོར། །གང་བསམས་ལྷུན་གྱིས་གྲུབ་པ་ཁྱོད་ལ་འདུད།

I bow down to you who spontaneously accomplished all wishes. Turning the wheel of action, you renovated the Go ma sa la gha ta stūpa—a support which is a field of merits for beings and gods.

།གཞོམ་གཞིག་མེད་པ་རྡོ་རྗེའི་སྐུ་བརྙེས་ཀྱང་། །བརྟག་འཛིན་བཟློག་ཕྱིར་ལྔ་བཅུ་རྩ་དྲུག་ལ།

།ཡ་མཚན་རྟེན་དང་ལྟས་བཟང་ཁྱད་པར་བཅས། །མཁའ་སྤྱོད་དག་པའི་ཞིང་དུ་བྱོན་ལ་འདུད།

I bow down to you who acquired an indestructible adamantine body. Still, in order to counteract adherence to permanence, at age fifty-six, accompanied by particularly wondrous signs and miracles you went to the pure land of the ḍākinīs.

།གངས་ཅན་གྲུབ་པའི་གཙོ་བོ་ཧེ་རུ་ཀའི། །རྨད་བྱུང་ངོ་མཚར་གཏམ་གྱི་མཛད་པ་གསུམ།

།དད་ལྡན་སྐྱེ་དགུའི་རྣ་དབང་རྒྱན་དུ་སྤྲུར། །དགེ་བས་འགྲོ་ཀུན་བླ་མས་རྗེས་འཛིན་ཤོག།

May the three acts of the outstanding and wondrous story of the Heruka, the chief siddha in the snowy land, be fashioned as an ear ornament of the faithful people.

[And may] the lama [gTsang smyon] assist sentient beings with his virtue.

།བདག་ཀྱང་དེང་ནས་བྱང་ཆུབ་མ་ཐོབ་བར། །འདྲེན་མཆོག་ཆོས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཧེ་རུ་ཀས།

།ཐེག་མཆོག་བཤེས་གཉེན་དངོས་སུ་མཛད་པའི་མཐུས། །བརྩེ་གཅིག་ཟབ་ལམ་སྒྲུབ་ལ་བརྩོན་པར་ཤོག།

May I as well, from now until I have obtained enlightenment, aided by the supreme guide, the dharma king heruka who truly acted as my spiritual

friend along the supreme way, endeavour to perfect the profound single-pointed path.

།ཁྱད་པར་གསང་ཆེན་བདམས་པའི་གནད་ལ་བསྣུན། །གཏུམ་མོ་འབར་བའི་ཞུ་བདེས་ལུས་ཀུན་ཁྱབ།

།གཞོམ་བཤིག་མེད་པ་འཇའ་ལུས་རྡོ་རྗེའི་སྐུ། །ཚེ་འདི་ཉིད་ལ་མངོན་དུ་འགྱུར་བར་ཤོག།

Especially, may I pierce the pith of the secret precepts, and may the melting bliss of the blazing *gtum mo* permeate my entire body.

May the indestructible rainbow adamantine body be manifested in this very life!

།གཞན་ཡང་ལུང་རྟོགས་བསྟེན་པའི་གྲུ་བོ་ཆེ། །ཐོས་བསམ་བསྒོམ་པས་བཙོས་ལེགས་བྲུས་གྱུར་ཏེ།

།འགྲོ་རྣམས་སྲིད་པའི་མཚོ་ལས་བསྒྲོལ་བ་ཡི། །དེད་དཔོན་ཐབས་ལ་མཁས་པར་བདག་གྱུར་ཅིག།

Moreover, may the great ship of teachings which consists of scripture and realization, be well built through hearing, reflecting and meditating.

[And may] I become skilled in the ways of a captain who rescues sentient beings from the ocean of samsara.

།དུས་གསུམ་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀུན་གྱི་བགྲོད་གཅིག་ལམ། །རྒྱལ་བ་ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་ཟབ་ལམ་བསྟན་པའི་རྒྱུན།

།མཚན་རྟོག་འཁྲུལ་པའི་དྲི་མས་མ་གོས་པར། །ཇི་སྲིད་མཐའི་བར་དུ་འཕེལ་བར་ཤོག།

The stream of teachings of you, the victor, the profound path—the single path treaded by all the Buddhas of the three times—may it spread to the end of existence unsullied by the impurities of mistaken conception.

Appendix 3: General Outline of the *Lion of Faith*

Appendix 4: A Tentative Chronology of the Life of gTsang smyon Heruka, based on his Hagiographies

1452	gTsang smyon is born in mKar kha outside of sTag tshal in Myang stod, north of rGyal rtse.
1452–1458	gTsang smyon's first six years: his mother and gTsang smyon himself have many auspicious dreams; gTsang smyon plays religious games and shows a natural interest in Buddhism; he sits in vajra position for long periods and spontaneously supplicates former bKa' brgyud masters.
1458 or 1459	At age six or seven:[1313] renunciation of samsara; receives novice monk-vows from mKhan chen Kun dga' Sangs rgyas.
1459–1465	Between ages seven and thirteen: many auspicious dreams and omens; displays great skill in memorization and keeps his monastic vows completely pure. Tries to escape to La phyi to meditate, but is caught and brought back to mKhar kha.
1465 or 1469	At age thirteen or seventeen: leaves mKhar kha and travels towards Tsāri by way of Lhasa; meets his root lama, Sha ra rab 'byams pa Sangs rgyas seng ge, before reaching Tsāri in Lha dbar Zur mkhar in Dwags po; stays with his lama for nine months. Then goes to Tsāri and meditates for three months; returns to mKhar kha where he spends five months in seclusion.
1468–1472 (1469–1472?)	Between sixteen and twenty: studies at dPal 'khor chos sde in rGyal rtse; studies the tantras and their commentaries; learns how to perform tantric rituals.

[1313] Contrary to prior practice the Western system of calculating age will be adhered to in the chronological outline.

1472	At age twenty: leaves dPal 'khor chos sde and becomes a wandering yogin; travel towards Tsāri together with his brother; travels to Lhasa by way of Rong chug; destroys ransom offering ceremony at sNe pa mdo; invited to the landlord dGe gnyan chos skyabs; visits Zur mkhar in Dwags po; meets Kun dga' bzang mo, bKra shis dar rgyas (Myriarch of Bya) and 'Chi med grub pa at Rib la spang mo.
1472–1475	Between twenty and twenty-three: three-year retreat in Tsāri; at age twenty-three: becomes an accomplished one, a heruka; due to his seemingly mad behavior the people of Tsāri give him his sobriquet: "Madman of gTsang". Conflict between gNyal/dMyal and Bya; gTsang smyon intervenes; visits the palace of Bya, Chos rgyal lhun po; wanders around; attacked by tribal people; subdues demons; meets the king bSam sde rgyal po Grags pa mtha' yas, the lord of Yar 'brog; attacked by drunks in Tshed thang; meets the district officer of sNe'u rdzong, dPal 'byor rgyal po; visits Lhasa; invited to the palace of dPal 'byor rgyal po; visits his mother in mKhar kha; travels together with his brother to La stod byang.
1476	At age twenty-four: meets Thang stong rGyal po at dPal chen ri bo che in La stod byang; travels through sMon on his way to Tsha 'da; meets Nam mkha' stobs rgyal with his retinue in Tsha 'da; stays some days in a charnel ground in bLang 'khor; stays in Chu bar for the autumn.
1477–1480	Between ages twenty-five and twenty-eight: goes to Nepal for the winter; visits Svayambhū Stūpa; returns to Tibet; stays in Chu bar ('Bri lce phug); meditates in La phyi (bDud 'dul phug); goes to gNya nang; embellishes Milarepa's footprint with gold at Lha phyi (retreat at bKra shis sgang); sings songs of realization; gathers disciples; intervenes in a conflict between Northern and Southern La stod.
1481	At age twenty-nine: travels to Ti se; meets the gLo bo ruler, bKra shis mgon, in gLo bo smon thang (Mustang) on his way to Ti se; circumambulates Ti se; meets the king of Mang yul gung thang, Khri rNam rgyal lde, in rDzong dkar on his way back from Ti se.

1482–1485	Between ages thirty and thirty-three: meditates in the Six Forts (rDzong drug) for three years; then one year of meditation in La phyi.
1486–1489	Between ages thirty-four and thirty-seven: three years of meditation in Tsāri; composes texts for the Aural Transmission compilation.
1489–1491 (1485–1488?)	Between ages thirty-seven and thirty-nine: meditation in La phyi; compiles and prints the *Life* and *Songs* of Milarepa; visits gLo bo smon thang for the second time, meets the ruler of sMon thang, A Seng rdo rje brtan pa.
1492–1495	Between ages forty and forty-three: three years of meditation in La phyi and Chu bar; composes Aural Transmission texts; one-year retreat in Chu bar; stays in Crystal Cave (Shel phug) for the summer; gives empowerments and instructions to many people; travels to sKyid grong and rDzong dkar where he meets the king of Gung thang and his sons.
1495	At age forty-three: visits the Kathmandu valley in Nepal for a second time: white-washes the Svayambhū Stūpa in the spring.
1496	At age forty-four: returns to Tibet; the people east and west of the Jo bo statue in sKyid grong is in conflict; he reconciles them.
1496–1499	Between ages forty-four and forty-six: retreat in Ti se; travels at the end of the summer and stays there to practise for three years.
1498	At age forty-six: stays one month in sMon thang (Mustang) on his way to Chu bar.
1499	Chu bar; guides many desciples, composes texts.
1501	At age forty-nine: receives invitations from the Nepalese king who wants him to repair the Svayambhū Stūpa.
1504	At age fifty-two: renovates the Svayambhū Stūpa, which takes three months; war between Rin spungs and rGyal rtse; gTsang smyon averts this danger; spends the winters

	in Chu bar and the summers in the forests of 'O 'byung; composes Aural Transmssions texts and completes the *Life of Marpa*.
1505	At age fifty-three: departs from Chu bar; meets Kun dga' rnam rgyal (king of La stod Lho) and Kun legs (king of La stod byang) in sTod; meets Don yod rdo rje of Rin spung in Shangs rnam rgyal gling; visits bSam grub rtse (Shigatse).
About 1506	At age fifty-four: stays for the summer in Nor bu khyung rtse, in Panam; visits mKhar kha, performs rituals for his dead mother; visits Lhasa; offerings in front of Jo bo; spends winter Zal mo brag.
1507	At age fifty-five: meets the dying disciple bKra shis rab rtan in Se bo sgang in Yar lung; falls ill; goes to Ras chung phug. Passes away at Ras chung phug.

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This study examines how and why the Tibetan monk Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan (1452–1507) suddenly left his monastery and became a "mad yogin". This dramatic change occurred when he was about twenty years old, and he devoted the rest of his life to a radical form of asceticism called "disciplined conduct".

Because of his provocative and apparently mad way of acting, people started to call him the "Madman of gTsang" (gTsang smyon). In the late 15th and early 16th centuries several mad yogins roamed the Tibetan plateau. Their strange and outrageous behavior modifies the picture of Buddhism in general, and of Tibetan Buddhism in particular. Since similar figures can also be found in other religions, gTsang smyon and the mad yogins of Tibet shed light upon a relatively common, but sometimes neglected religious phenomenon.

The main sources of the study are three Tibetan hagiographies written by gTsang smyon's disciples in the 16th century. These texts are only available in Tibetan, and a central part of the study is devoted to presenting, contextualizing and analysing their contents, focusing upon the first thirty years of gTsang smyon's life.

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